



NUNC COGNOSCO EX PARTE



TRENT UNIVERSITY  
LIBRARY







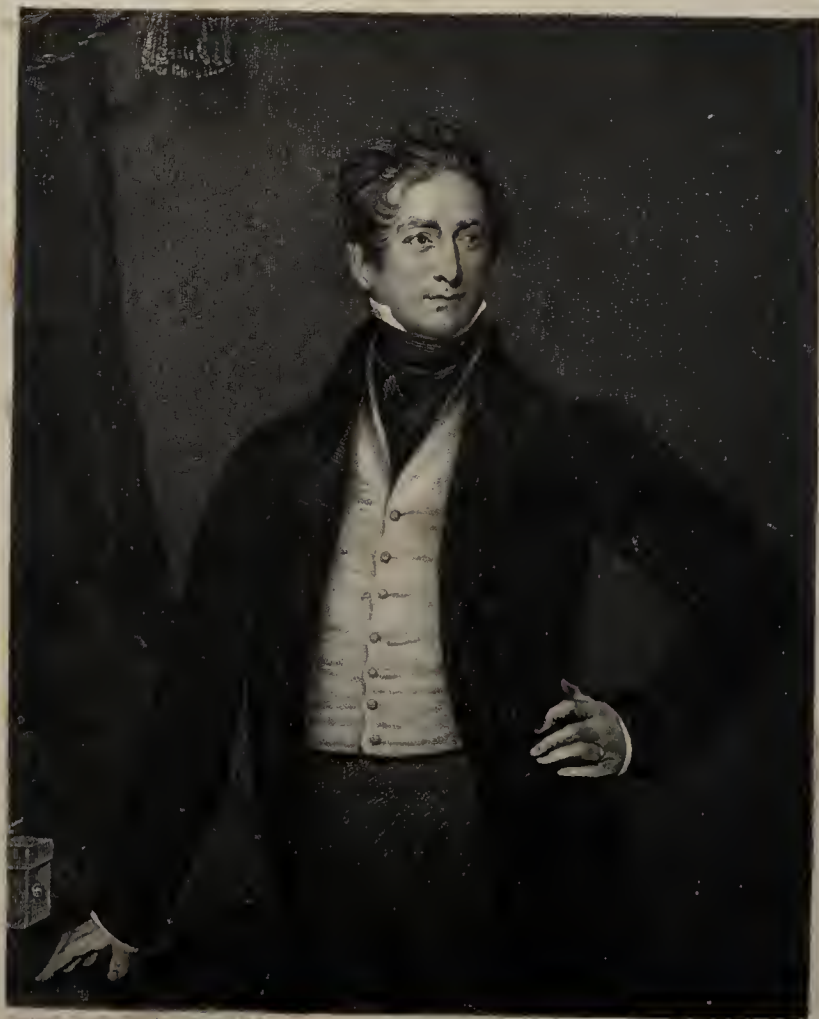












*The Duke of Devonshire, M. P.*

*Robert Peel*

LIFE AND TIMES

OF

SIR ROBERT PEELE.

BY

CHARLES MACKAY, LL.D.,

AUTHOR OF "EGERIA," "TOWN LYRICS," "VOICES FROM THE CROWD," ETC., ETC.

VOL. IV.

PETER JACKSON, LATE FISHER, SON, & CO.  
ANGEL STREET, ST. MARTIN'S-LE-GRAND, LONDON.



DA 536 . P3 T2 1851 v 4

## P R E F A C E.

THE following volume, a sequel to the three compiled by the late Dr. Cooke Taylor, carries on the history of the Life and Times of SIR ROBERT PEEL, from the date of his final retirement from the government which repealed the Corn Laws, to his premature and melancholy death. It contains either an abstract of, or a full report of every speech he made in the interval, including some of the most masterly and elaborate orations which he ever delivered. The volume forms, it is presumed, a complete record of his published opinions and acts, during an important and eventful period, to which all may resort who wish to know the sentiments of so great a statesman, upon the questions which still agitate society. Until the probably distant day when the private papers and correspondence of SIR ROBERT PEEL shall be arranged and published by his literary executors, this record of the events in which he took

## PREFACE.

part, will fill a gap in the political annals of our time. The author, or compiler, makes no pretensions to call it a history, for the day for a history of these events has not yet arrived. He claims no other merit than that of faithfully reproducing, in the regular continuity of their dates, the last words of a great statesman ; words which must long continue to exercise a control over the politics of his country, and to influence the actions of the men who have survived, to carry on in power, or in opposition, the affairs of Great Britain. If he have at times been warm in his eulogia, his praises are the growth of his convictions, and have this much to vouch for their sincerity—that they are not offered as flattery to the living, but as a tribute to the memory and to the virtues of the dead.

LONDON, MARCH, 1851.

# CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.	
The Irish Famine.....	PAGE 1
CHAPTER II.	
Session of 1847—Opening of the Ports .....	10
CHAPTER III.	
Ministerial Measures for the Relief of Ireland .....	26
CHAPTER IV.	
Lord George Bentinck's Irish Railway Scheme.....	47
CHAPTER V.	
Irish Railways—The Monetary Crisis .....	88
CHAPTER VI.	
The Education Grant .....	112
CHAPTER VII.	
Colonization and Emigration .....	141
CHAPTER VIII.	
Foreign Topics—Occupation of Cracow—Intervention in Portugal—Prorogation and Dissolution of Parliament ...	156
CHAPTER IX.	
Election of a New Parliament—Distress and Outrage in Ire- land—Commercial Panic .....	190
CHAPTER X.	
The Jewish Disabilities Bill .....	278
CHAPTER XI.	
Financial State of the Country—The French Revolution— The Income Tax .....	305

## CONTENTS.

### CHAPTER XII.

The Chartist and Repeal Riots .....	342
-------------------------------------	-----

### CHAPTER XIII.

Navigation Laws—The West Indies and the Sugar Duties ...	356
--	-----

### CHAPTER XIV.

Reports of the Committees on the Bank Charter Act .....	393
---	-----

### CHAPTER XV.

Misunderstanding with the Spanish Government—Diplomatic Relations with the Court of Rome—Prorogation of Parliament .....	404
--	-----

### CHAPTER XVI.

Difficulties of the Irish Poor Law—Death of Lord George Bentinck, &c.—Session of 1849 .....	416
--	-----

### CHAPTER XVII.

Irish Poor Law—Rate in Aid Bill—Sir Robert Peel's Proposition .....	431
--	-----

### CHAPTER XVIII.

The Report of the Navigation Laws—Colonial Relations, &c.	490
---	-----

### CHAPTER XIX.

Tactics of the Opposition—Mr. D'Israeli's Motions on the Agricultural Interests, and the State of the Nation .....	510
---	-----

### CHAPTER XX.

Sir Robert Peel at the Mansion House—Visit to the High- lands—Letter to his Tenantry.....	539
--	-----

### CHAPTER XXI.

The Session of 1850—The last Speech of Sir Robert Peel ...	556
--	-----

### CHAPTER XXII.

Melancholy Accident to, and Death of, Sir Robert Peel— Proceedings in Parliament—Popular Sympathy—Con- clusion .....	602
--	-----

# LIST OF PLATES.

VOL. IV.

	PAGE
1. Sir Robert Peel .....	FRONTISPIECE
2. Her Majesty Queen Victoria .....	10
3. The Marquis of Londonderry .....	171
4. The Right Hon. C. J. Fox .....	228
5. Lord Holland.....	261
6. Louis Philippe .....	311
7. Louis Napoleon .....	316
8. A. Lamartine.....	353
9. J. P. Curran .....	392
10. Lord Gough .....	504
11. H. R. H. Prince Albert.....	555
12. Queen Adelaide.....	557
13. The House of Commons .....	576
14. Sir Benjamin Brodie.....	603
15. Lord Viscount Hardinge .....	607
16. Sir Thomas Lawrence .....	653





# SIR ROBERT PEELE:

## HIS LIFE AND TIMES.



### CHAPTER I.

#### THE IRISH FAMINE.

THE autumn and winter of 1846-7 were marked with features of distress and difficulty, which suggested a remarkable commentary upon the doctrine of free trade in corn, and painfully justified Sir Robert Peel's great measure. Early in August, the tidings spread far and wide, that the potato disease had again appeared, and threatened the destruction of the crops in all parts of Ireland, as well as in many parts of England and Scotland. These prognostications were but too fearfully fulfilled. To aggravate the distress consequent upon the failure of the potato crop, there was a deficient grain-harvest throughout Europe. Prices rapidly rose, and the sources from which supplies might ordinarily have been looked for were closed. Severe distress prevailed in all parts of the United Kingdom; riots of an alarming character broke out in Ireland, and the unhappy people died by thousands, of absolute starvation. Nor did that

country stand alone in the exhibition of such scenes; in France, Belgium, and many other parts of Europe, there were occasional disturbances in which lives were lost.

Early in September the lord-lieutenant of Ireland issued fifty-eight proclamations, declaring as many districts to be in a state of great distress, and directing that extraordinary sessions should be held under the Labour-rate act, (passed in the last session of parliament,) to make presentments for the execution of public works, in order to employ the starving people, deprived of everything in being deprived of the potato. In less than a month's time, two hundred and forty-eight presentments were made; and it appeared, that, in many cases, more than a year's value of the respective baronies in which the sessions were held, was rated for these unproductive works—the making of roads, that led nowhere; the construction of bridges, that were not needed; and the breaking of stones upon the road.

In consequence of this perplexing and discouraging commencement, the lord-lieutenant, reckoning on obtaining indemnity from parliament, undertook the responsibility of departing from the provisions of the Labour-rate act, and issued a circular sanctioning the undertaking of works of a reproductive character, and of permanent utility. But still the most dreadful suffering prevailed. At a meeting of the clergy, held at Exeter Hall, in London, it was stated, by the Rev. Mr. Hazlewood, that "The distress which prevailed in the districts with which he was acquainted was of the most terrific character. He had known instances where the starving people sucked the blood of living cattle, in order to allay the cravings of hunger. He had seen them himself apply their mouths to the wound, and suck the blood. As an instance of the awful extent of the destitution, it was sufficient to allude to the horrifying fact, that, in one district, near Skibbereen, out of a population of

62,000 individuals, 5,060 persons had died since November last, while 15,000 more were now in a hopeless state, and must soon be also in the grave."

At a meeting in Dublin, it was stated, on the authority of the Dean of Cloyne, that, between September and Christmas, 5,000 persons had perished of famine on the south-west coast alone. In many parts of the country, the coroners were at work night and day; and at one inquest at Bantry, held on forty bodies, a verdict of "death by starvation" was returned. This indeed was the common verdict, but not frequently over so many bodies at one inquest. In many cases, the bodies were left unburied, for want of money or hands to perform the last offices. Putrifying in miserable hovels, or by the road-sides, they engendered a fearful pestilence, putrid and typhus fever, which anticipated the work of starvation by carrying off their thousands.

Driven at length to desperation, troops of starving peasantry marched in from surrounding districts, and broke open the bread-stores; and riots ensued at Dunganon and elsewhere, in which the lives of many people were sacrificed.

In Scotland, particularly in the Highlands and islands, similar distress prevailed; it being estimated that more than 330,000 inhabitants of these northern and western districts were this year deprived of their usual means of sustenance.

In order still further to mitigate the sufferings of the Celtic populations dependent upon the potato, public meetings were held in Dublin, Edinburgh, London, and other cities and towns. Subscriptions truly magnificent in amount were raised, to purchase and send food to the starving multitudes.

On the 13th of January, a Queen's letter was issued, to promote this object. Her Majesty's appeal was liberally

responded to; and not only was money subscribed to the amount of upwards of £100,000, but corn was bought with it, and ships of the royal navy, in addition to others of the merchant service, freighted with it, and despatched to the most distressed districts. The cry of distress penetrated far beyond the circle of our ordinary social relations. Even across the Atlantic it made its way to hearts which could not forget that the ties of consanguinity existed between them and the helpless and stricken people of Ireland. Early in January, meetings were held in Boston, Baltimore, New York, and several great cities in the United States, where the warmest sympathy was expressed for the sorrows of the "old country." Considerable sums of money were subscribed; which, being converted into corn, were despatched to the coast of Ireland. Rome, also, and many other cities of Europe, sent their contributions of relief. One of the most remarkable instances of the universal interest and sympathy manifested on this occasion, was in the offer of no less than £10,000 by the Sultan, besides some ship-loads of provisions. His Majesty's ministers represented, however, that Queen Victoria having subscribed only £2,000, it would not be respectful for a foreign sovereign to subscribe a larger sum; and the Sultan confined his subscription to £1,000, which was duly despatched to Ireland.

Meantime, public feeling in Ireland was still further agitated by the divisions which took place between Mr. O'Connell and the "Young Ireland" party, headed by the rash, weak, and misguided Mr. Smith O'Brien, and by Mr. John Mitchell, and Mr. F. Meagher. The point at issue was, as to the adoption of physical force for repealing the Union, and for purposes of alleged political regeneration. The veteran leader vehemently opposed all agitation except that which was strictly legal; whilst the new enthusiasts as recklessly asserted the right and necessity of appealing to the "pike" and the



“sword.” Mr. O’Connell made his last speech in Conciliation Hall on the 25th of January.

Throughout the whole of this period of national calamity, vast numbers of starving Irish flocked over to England. Liverpool, Bristol, and Glasgow, the principal ports of our western coast, were absolutely invaded by them. In Liverpool alone, upwards of 170,000 persons arrived between the months of January and May inclusive. The streets of our cities, and the roads of our rural districts, swarmed for many months with these distressed people, upon whose countenances and frames famine seemed to have done the work of deteriorating the species. The retreating forehead, the protruding jaws, the sunken cheek, and the almost idiotic expression of countenance, spoke not merely of present famine, but of long-existing neglect, degradation, and suffering. These unhappy creatures were not only starving, but diseased. Famine had prepared the way for fever; numbers of them arrived in our ports in such a shocking condition, that eventually it was found necessary to issue an order compelling all vessels from Ireland, carrying such passengers, to perform quarantine.

It could hardly be supposed, whilst so much distress, entailing so large a waste of capital, existed throughout the kingdom, occasioned by a scarcity in the supply of the great staple articles of the food of millions, that the public mind, which had recently received a great practical lesson in free-trade principles, should remain inactive, and calmly allow the application of these principles to remain deferred to a future period, arbitrarily defined by Peel’s Act. It was obvious, indeed, to all unprejudiced observers, that their immediate operation was demanded. Accordingly, in September and October, meetings were held in London, Manchester, Glasgow, and in most of the important towns in the kingdom, to memorialize the government for the immediate

opening of the ports, for the admission of corn freed from the four-shilling duty still attached to it. Several deputations waited upon Lord John Russell, to press this subject upon his attention. To the deputation from the city of London, his lordship replied to the effect, that he saw no immediate necessity for the step urged upon him, but that he should be prepared to advise such a measure if prices continued to rise. At a later day (2nd December, 1846), another deputation of the citizens of London presented a memorial to the Queen, through the Home Office, praying for the immediate opening of the ports.

In the course of a week from this last date, France set the example of removing the restrictions which still existed upon the importation of corn, by an ordonnance published in the *Moniteur*, authorizing the admission for home consumption of foreign corn and flour in foreign bottoms. Another ordonnance, issued at this time, prohibited the exportation of potatoes and dried vegetables, during a certain period. Prices, however, continued to rise in Great Britain, in spite of the importation of considerable quantities of corn, and the feeling of alarm became general.

While these events were in progress, the whole nation looked with anxiety to the opening of parliament, fixed for the 19th January. Politicians eagerly canvassed the probable views of the leaders of parties as to the future course of policy which it would become necessary to adopt. The public anxiety upon this point, however, was doomed to remain in suspense; for although everybody foresaw that a speedy opening of the ports would be a matter of absolute and unavoidable necessity, there was no word let drop, either on the part of the government or of the leaders of that party of statesmen who had gone out of office with Sir Robert Peel, as to an intention of adopting such a course.

No little interest, however, was attached to a visit paid to Manchester early in January, by Lord Lincoln—one of Sir Robert Peel's late colleagues—and who was supposed to be in the secret of his confidence, so far as that confidence upon matters of public policy was ever extended to colleague or adversary. The purport of this visit was to sound the feelings of the people of the great cotton metropolis, in case his lordship should consent to offer himself as a candidate for the representation. In this light the visit led to no results, and the speeches made on the occasion would be utterly uninteresting to recall, but for one remarkable observation of his lordship's, which came in strange contrast to the strong and universally expressed opinion upon the great question then agitating the public mind, and no less in contrast to the very measure which, in a very few days afterwards, her Majesty recommended from the throne, and which ministers proposed and carried with the unanimous assent of parliament. At a meeting held at the Corn Exchange, Lord Lincoln reviewed the liberal policy of the administration of which he had been a member, and explained his views as to the carrying out of the principles upon which that policy was based. After answering several questions on universal suffrage, the ballot, the payment of Catholic priests, and other matters interesting to the electors, or to sections of them, he stated that "he objected to a total and immediate repeal of the present Corn Law, considering the law of last session a final measure." So short-sighted, after all, is human wisdom!

Social and domestic distresses were by no means the only causes of anxiety and perplexity to those intrusted with the direction of public affairs at this period. It may be sufficient to allude to the revolution which commenced in Portugal early in 1847, and which was protracted till the middle of summer, and in the settlement of which



this country took an active part. In Spain, the recent marriages of the Queen Isabella with her cousin Don Francisco d'Asis, and of the Infanta Maria Louisa with the Duke of Montpensier, were stoutly but unsuccessfully resisted by the British government. The last marriage especially excited the attention of all Europe; and the personal and dynastic objects, in contradistinction to, and in opposition with, the real interests of the French people, which were displayed in the conduct of the matter from first to last, did more to undermine the throne of Louis Philippe than any act of his reign. This ill-omened marriage, though it did not cause, most undoubtedly precipitated the revolution. In America, the aggressive and unjust war waged by the United States against Mexico, occupied, though in a less painful and absorbing degree, the attention of our foreign office.

The session of the French chambers was opened early in January by the king, in a speech which failed to meet the expectations of Europe, both in its reference to the question of electoral reform, and to the great points of state policy which had occurred within the preceding year. Many of these—the Spanish marriages more especially—were still the subject of diplomatic embroilment, and added to the uneasiness which was universally felt throughout Europe. “My relations with all foreign powers,” he said, “afford me the firmest confidence that the peace of the world continues secure.” He had, however, protested against the infraction of treaties, in the case of the destruction of the free republic of Cracow, which he described as “an unexpected event.”

The reference to the Montpensier marriage was couched in terms which excited the derision, not to say the disgust, of Europe:—

“The marriage of my beloved son, the Duke de Montpensier, with my beloved niece the Infanta of Spain, Luisa Fer-

nanda, has completed the satisfaction and consolation which Providence has vouchsafed me in my family. This union will be a fresh pledge of those good and intimate relations, which have so long subsisted between France and Spain, and the maintenance of which is as desirable for the prosperity, as for the reciprocal security, of the two states."

But, at this period, all other questions, however important, were secondary to those excited by the famine which prevailed throughout Europe, and which pressed with its most fatal weight upon Ireland.

## CHAPTER II.

## SESSION OF 1847—OPENING OF THE PORTS.

ON the 19th of January parliament was opened by her Majesty in person, with a speech, in which, as might be expected, the condition of Ireland formed the prominent topic. The attention of the legislature was impressively directed not only to providing relief for the immediate distress, but to the consideration of measures for the amelioration of "the permanent condition" of that country. Further, a relaxation of the duty on corn, and a temporary remission of the duties upon sugar used in brewing and distilling, were suggested as measures calculated to alleviate the existing distress. In a word, the Royal speech did not omit to notice the great social questions which had so long and painfully engrossed the thoughts of the community; and the importance attached to them in this document became the more striking, from the brief and guarded manner in which matters of foreign policy were referred to. The following is a copy of the speech:—

"My Lords and Gentlemen,—It is with the deepest concern that, upon your again assembling, I have to call your attention to the dearth of provisions which prevails in Ireland, and in parts of Scotland.

"In Ireland, especially, the loss of the usual food of the people has been the cause of severe sufferings, of disease, and of greatly increased mortality among the poorer classes. Outrages have become more frequent, chiefly directed against property; and the transit of provisions has been rendered unsafe in some parts of the country.





Victoria R



“ With a view to mitigate these evils, very large numbers of men have been employed, and have received wages in pursuance of an act passed in the last session of parliament. Some deviations from that act, which have been authorized by the lord-lieutenant of Ireland, in order to promote more useful employment, will, I trust, receive your sanction. Means have been taken to lessen the pressure of want in districts which are most remote from the ordinary sources of supply. Outrages have been repressed, as far as it was possible, by the military and police.

“ It is satisfactory to me to observe, that, in many of the most distressed districts, the patience and resignation of the people have been most exemplary.

“ The deficiency of the harvest in France and Germany, and other parts of Europe, has added to the difficulty of obtaining adequate supplies of provisions.

“ It will be your duty to consider what further measures are required to alleviate the existing distress. I recommend to you to take into your serious consideration, whether by increasing, for a limited period, the facilities for importing corn from foreign countries, and by the admission of sugar more freely into breweries and distilleries, the supply of food may be beneficially augmented.

“ I have likewise to direct your earnest consideration to the permanent condition of Ireland. You will perceive, in the absence of political excitement, an opportunity for taking a dispassionate survey of the social evils which afflict that part of the United Kingdom. Various measures will be laid before you, which, if adopted by parliament, may tend to raise the great mass of the people in comfort, to promote agriculture, and to lessen the pressure of that competition for the occupation of land which has been the fruitful source of crime and misery.

“ The marriage of the Infanta Luisa Fernanda, of Spain,

to the Duke of Montpensier, has given rise to a correspondence between my government and those of France and Spain.

“The extinction of the free state of Cracow has appeared to me to be so manifest a violation of the treaty of Vienna, that I have commanded that a protest against that act should be delivered to the courts of Vienna, Petersburg, and Berlin, which were parties to it. Copies of these several papers will be laid before you.

“I entertain confident hopes that the hostilities in the River Plate, which have so long interrupted commerce, may soon be terminated; and my efforts, in conjunction with those of the King of the French, will be earnestly directed to that end.

“My relations, generally, with foreign powers, inspire me with the fullest confidence in the maintenance of peace.

“Gentlemen of the House of Commons,—I have directed the estimates to be prepared, with a view to provide for the efficiency of the public service, with a due regard to economy.

“My Lords and Gentlemen,—I have ordered every requisite preparation to be made for putting into operation the act of the last session of parliament, for the establishment of Local Courts for the Recovery of Small Debts. It is my hope that the enforcement of civil rights in all parts of the country to which the act relates, may by this measure be materially facilitated.

“I recommend to your attention measures which will be laid before you for improving the health of towns; an object, the importance of which you will not fail to appreciate.

“Deeply sensible of the blessings, which after a season of calamity have been so often vouchsafed to this nation by a superintending Providence, I confide these important mat-



ters to your care, in a full conviction that your discussions will be guided by an impartial spirit ; and in the hope that the present sufferings of my people may be lightened, and that their future condition may be improved by your deliberative wisdom."

The address was moved in the Upper House by Lord Hatherton, and seconded by Lord Carew ; in the Commons by Mr. C. Howard, and seconded by Mr. Ricardo. The debates which followed in both houses were brief, and unmarked by the slightest manifestation of opposition, or important difference of opinion. The ordinary rancour of party feeling seemed, for a time, to have been lost sight of amid the scenes of distress and famine which prevailed. No one interposed to delay, even by a suggestion, the measures of alleviation which were about to be proposed upon the responsibility of the ministry. Even Lord Stanley, who, a few days before the meeting of parliament, had addressed a circular to his political colleagues—thus avowedly assuming the position of leader of the opposition—although he did not approve of the general policy of government, abstained from moving any amendment, either in regard to Irish matters, or the threatened abandonment of the last relics of the Corn duty. With respect to Ireland, indeed, he deprecated the continuance of that party warfare, which had for so many generations obstructed the fulfilment of its hopes of regeneration and happiness. "In legislating," he said, "for the welfare of Ireland, provided you exclude those religious and political controversies which have distracted that country, and made it the battle-field of parties, and provided you will honestly labour for its social improvement, all the distinctions of party will be merged, all controversies will be sunk, all questions as to who shall carry such and such measures, will be dismissed, and the government may rely on the cordial co-operation of those whom they look upon as political opponents."

In the Commons, Lord George Bentinck spoke to a very similar effect. "Neither he nor his friends had any intention to make Ireland the battle-field of party. He deeply sympathized with the miseries of Ireland, and would give his best and calmest attention to any remedies brought forward for their relief. He must, however, deal frankly with the government. Though he did not censure ministers for not calling parliament together three months ago, instead of superseding by their own authority the legislature itself, he could not say that their acts were such as he could agree to. He could not look at the operation of the poor-employment act, and say that it had worked well; for its effect had been to leave the fields of Ireland untilled. Neither could he agree in the wisdom of the ministerial measures for the supply of food to the people; for government ought to have broken through the rules of political economy, and to have provided the people of Ireland with a supply of food." Towards the conclusion of his speech, however, he observed, that "he should wait to see the other measures proposed by government, before he expressed any opinion upon them. He hoped that those which they contemplated for Ireland would be grand, comprehensive, and successful: if they were not, he would venture to propose a measure of his own."

Mr. Disraeli added to this statement, "that no difference of opinion existed, and that assistance ample and prompt would be given to Ireland, and in such a manner as to conduce to the future happiness of that country." Sir Robert Peel made a very few observations upon this occasion, as if he felt that his great measure was more vindicated by events, than by any opinion which he could express. He remarked, "that he should abstain from all reference to the Spanish marriages, further than to assert that the late government, during the period of their power, never made any attempt to secure for a prince

of the house of Saxe-Coburg, the hand of the Queen of Spain. As to the occupation of Cracow, he regretted the extinction of that independent territory, and thought the pretence of danger to the three powers, urged as the reason of the occupation, was utterly inadequate to warrant an act of such dangerous consequences. He regretted that no reference had been made, in the speech from the throne, to the state of the Revenue. He did not blame the government for not having called parliament together at an earlier period; and, considering the difficulties that surrounded their Irish administration, he was prepared to consider their measures with attention and fairness. To the proposed removal of the four-shilling duty on corn, the suspension of the navigation laws, and the admission of sugar for distilleries, he was prepared to give his cordial support."

After a long and desultory discussion, the address was carried without a dissentient voice.

Government lost no time in bringing forward the important measures of relief which the Royal speech had announced. The first question mooted, was that of the opening of the ports, which Lord John Russell brought forward in a committee of the whole house on Thursday, the 21<sup>st</sup> January. His speech was brief, but convincing. The statements he adduced were few, simple, and to the point. They did not need the aid of argumentation, or the adornments of fancy.

After a few introductory remarks relative to the failure of the potato crop, and the distress occasioned by it, Lord John Russell alluded to the apprehension of a scarcity and of consequent high prices. "There had been, it was true, rather a decline than an increase of prices from the middle of October to the end of November; but from that time there had been a rise of prices very considerable indeed, and of an alarming character, when the nature of the calamity was considered, coming, as it did, immediately

at the time of the harvest. The price of wheat in the month of August was 47s.; on the 1st of September, it was 49s. but the price had risen in the course of the first week in January to 64s. 4d.; in the second week to 66s. 10d., and the week's average, to the 16th of the present month, was 70s. 3d. During the past year we had had a supply of 4,800,000 quarters of corn from foreign countries; but, with reference to the supply that might be expected during the remainder of the year, and before the next harvest, it was to be considered that there were but very few parts of the world from whence that supply could come. There had been a great deficiency in the harvest in France, Germany, and a great part of the west of Europe. Measures had been taken in most of those countries to supply that deficiency by the admission of corn free of duty. A law had lately been passed in France, by which the importation of wheat was allowed free of duty, and also allowing all ships of foreign nations to enter the ports of France. Similar measures had been passed in other countries, and in others the exportation of corn had been prohibited. The stock on hand in this country was very low, and it was naturally expected that prices would be high. There were only two places from which supplies might be obtained, Odessa and America."

In conclusion, upon this subject, he said—

"In order to afford every facility for the introduction of foreign grain, we propose, that, in regard to corn, the duty at present levied shall be suspended till the 1st of September in the present year. That is the proposition of her Majesty's government. We shall leave to parliament afterwards to consider whether it is expedient to continue the suspension, or to revert to the law which is at present in operation. I do not think that any party in this house should oppose the proposition we have made. The advocates of the corn-laws have never contended that



it was not admissible to suspend the principle when great emergencies arose. With regard to those who were opposed to restriction, and who argued that in February, 1849, the duty should be reduced to 1s., they could have no difficulty in relation to the proposed suspension."

His lordship then passed to another subject "intimately connected with the preceding," namely, the Navigation Laws, the tendency of which, under the present pressure, was greatly to enhance the cost of freight:—

"From the Baltic the freight was 3s. 9d. to 4s. 6d. There were some instances of freight still more remarkable, and still more affecting the supply of corn to Ireland from foreign countries. He would quote one instance; the freight of a quarter of wheat from London to Cork, varied generally from 1s. to 1s. 2d., per quarter; at the present moment it averaged from 3s. to 3s. 6d., and there was considerable difficulty in finding vessels for the purpose of exportation. By a lower rate of freightage, we should be able to employ some more of our vessels, from whence we might anticipate much good to result."

He concluded by moving for leave to bring in bills to suspend the operation of the Corn-importation act, and the Navigation Laws, till the 1st of September, 1847.

Perhaps the most remarkable circumstance connected with this measure, and which serves to illustrate how, in times of danger, men of the extremest opinions fall involuntarily into a common course for the general safety, was, that Lord John Russell's motion was seconded by Mr. Banks, a staunch protectionist. Whilst, however, Mr. Banks supported the course proposed, he observed, that, as it seemed to him, "the noble lord did not expect much benefit to be derived from it, otherwise he would have done what would have been his duty, in calling parliament together at an earlier period, for the purpose of passing it." This speaker

was not the only one who rebuked the government for their dilatoriness in this matter. Sir H. Winston Barron, on behalf of Ireland, regretted the delay which had occurred in the assembling of parliament. Mr. Goulburn cordially supported the measure, and "in doing so, could not help expressing his opinion, that the adoption of such a course, at an antecedent period, would have been most advantageous, as at the present time, the grain of the foreign countries to which we looked for supplies was already engaged by other purchasers, who were competing for its possession; yet it was most desirable to obtain, through the suspension of the duties, possession of whatever surplus remained, as the continuance of the duty might divert those supplies from our shores to other countries. With regard to the suspension of the navigation laws, this argument applied even with greater force, as France had suspended her navigation laws for the purpose of getting corn into France; and, therefore, Great Britain had not the same advantage with her ships as she would have had if France had not adopted such a course. Corn from America, for instance, would be carried to France, when the American ships were informed, at the nearest port, that the navigation laws had been suspended."

It is a fact worthy of remark, that Sir Robert Peel did not speak on this occasion. Lord G. Bentinek, whilst supporting the measure, took care to "guard himself against being supposed to approve of the policy of government." As regarded the navigation laws, he said, that "he had always anticipated, when the shipping interest had joined the corn-law league, in forcing the repeal of the corn laws, that it would find its own turn to come next, and suffer the penalty of its rashness."

Leave was given, without opposition, to bring in the two bills for the suspension, respectively, of the duty on corn, and the navigation laws till the 1st of September following. The

bills were accordingly brought in, and read a first time; and the standing orders being suspended for the purpose, they passed through their remaining stages on the ensuing day. Having been sent up to the Lords, they were read a third time, and passed, on the 25th of January.

On the same evening that these measures passed through the Commons, the Chancellor of the Exchequer brought forward his measure for allowing the use of sugar, molasses, &c., in breweries and distilleries—a measure which at any time he thought might be adopted with much benefit to all parties interested, and without detriment to the revenue, but which the present high price of malt rendered exceedingly desirable. The price of malt\* had risen to 88s. or 90s.; and the use of sugar would effect a saving of 6s. per quarter. He also proposed an alteration in the duties upon rum. In the year 1846 the duty upon British spirit was 7s. 10d., that upon colonial rum 9s. 4d.—leaving a difference of 1s. 6d. between the excise duty on spirits and the colonial duty on rum. He would at once propose the reduction of the differential duty to 1s.

These propositions were agreed to, after a brief discussion, and bills founded upon them were shortly afterwards passed into law.

A necessary and inevitable complement of the great Free Trade measure of Sir Robert Peel, was the total repeal of the Navigation Laws. It would have been both absurd and unjust to have abolished the customs' duties upon the main articles of food, and to have retained duties upon the vessels which imported them. The common sense of all parties in parliament saw this in the moment of exigency; and

\* In consequence of the increasing price of barley, the London brewers raised the price of beer 5s. a barrel; being the first instance of a fluctuation in the price of that article for 17 years. This increase was shortly afterwards abated.

when the ports were opened under the pressure of famine, the operation of the navigation laws, as we have just stated, was temporarily suspended. It would have been creditable to the Russell ministry, if, at the very outset of its career, it had originated a measure not merely to suspend, but to repeal those laws. Why it refrained from doing so, is now in vain to speculate. As historians of the period, we have only to state the facts as they occurred, namely, that, on the 9th February, Mr. Ricardo, the member for Stoke-upon-Trent, moved for "a select committee to inquire into the operation of the Navigation Laws." In doing so, he referred to the fact, not without significance, that in 1844, a committee had been appointed upon this very subject—appointed at the instance of the Conservative party, which, having made no report, although it printed the evidence, was re-appointed in 1845. When the session of 1845 closed, the committee had not finished its labours; and it was not afterwards re-appointed. Mr. Ricardo stated, therefore, that he considered he was entitled to demand a new inquiry, "in which he should be prepared to show, that these laws had been of the most mischievous tendency, as regarded trade, manufactures, shipping, and our colonies. In proportion as the navigation laws drove foreign tonnage from our ports, they circumscribed the commerce of the country, and limited the operations of its manufactures." He then instanced several cases in which the laws in question had operated both absurdly and injuriously upon our direct and indirect trade. "The evils to which they gave rise were felt by the colonies, as well as by the parent country; whilst the former suffered from them in a manner peculiar to themselves. Under existing circumstances, every principle of justice was set at defiance by interfering with the indirect trade of the colonies. The exclusive colonial system, of which the navigation laws were a type, had



lost Brazil to Portugal, and the United States to Great Britain, and had left only Java to Holland, and Cuba to Spain.”

It is unnecessary at this time to go into the remaining arguments of the speaker, which he put with much force and ability. His motion was seconded by Mr. Hume, who boldly resisted the notion of finality in matters of free trade. Mr. Milner Gibson, Chairman of the Board of Trade, was the first, on the part of government, to signify its assent to the proposition; which was feebly assailed by the extreme Protectionist party, foremost amongst whom stood Mr. Liddell, and Lord George Bentinck. Sir Robert Peel supported the motion, in a speech which, though extremely short, was argumentative and effective. Indeed, after reading the terms in which the right honourable baronet referred to the mischievous tendencies of the navigation laws, as they presented themselves in 1815 and 1826, one is tempted to believe that a secret conviction of the abstract truth of the principles of free trade, must have been rooted in his mind at a much earlier period than his public acts would seem to denote; and that he had long been accustomed to look upon the great change which he lived to see effected, merely as a matter of time. Conclusions so sweeping and so mature, based upon the experience of circumstances long elapsed, could hardly have been of very recent formation.

The few observations he made upon this occasion ran as follow:—

“I wish to state, that it is my intention to give my support to the proposition of the honourable gentleman, the member for Stoke-upon-Trent. I think there can be no reason given why there should not be an inquiry into the operation and effect of the navigation laws; nor why there should not be an opportunity given of ascertaining whether the main-

tenance of those laws, as they at present exist, is for the interest of British commerce, or for the interest of British shipping. Above all, I think it is a subject for consideration, whether or no the maintenance of those laws, as affecting our mereantile interests, is necessary for the support of the maritime supremacy of this country. I give my assent to this inquiry; and although it is proposed by an individual member of parliament, and assented to by the government, yet being proposed by an individual member of parliament, I think the assenting to the inquiry in no way binds the parties to support the particular opinions of the honourable member. The whole subject is to be referred to a committee, not for the purpose of giving effect to any particular preconceived notions, but it is to be a *bonâ fide* inquiry into all the bearings of this very important question. It is on this condition that I give my ready assent to this proposal. It has been remarked in the course of this debate, that the navigation laws have endured for 200 years, and that they take their paternity from the period of the Protectorate. The navigation laws, I think, are of much older date. The origin, I apprehend, was almost simultaneous with the commencement of a commercial and military marine in this country, and that at the time of the Protectorate the principle then existing was incorporated in the code of laws. But whatever may be their antiquity, you have been compelled from time to time to relax them, not from any particular principle with regard to them, but from mere necessity. In the year 1815 why did you relax those navigation laws? Was it upon the chances of any superior speculative advantages which you might derive from their relaxation? No. It was because the Americans were determined to introduce, and to act upon your principles, and to levy duties upon your ships entering their ports, and levy duties upon your goods in the same manner as you levied upon foreign vessels and goods

entering yours. And the question you had to consider in the year 1815 was, whether by the rigid maintenance of the navigation laws you would not give advantages to the produce of other countries in American markets, or by relinquishing a portion of them, and admitting American vessels to equivalent advantages with your own in British ports, you would not secure the intercourse with the United States. It was on this sort of speculative notion you relaxed the navigation laws in 1815. I say, the Americans had themselves applied the principle of those laws, and you had to take your choice between the exclusion of your commerce from American ports, or the relaxation of your laws. Mr Huskisson again relaxed the navigation laws in 1824. But Mr. Huskisson did not then act upon any speculative notion. He did so because Prussia was acting then upon precisely the same principle as America had been adopting in 1815: In the course of the speech which Mr. Huskisson made in 1826, upon the budget, he explained his motives for having relaxed those laws, in signing the reciprocity treaties in the year 1824. It was because Prussia was then preparing to follow the example of the United States. He had been informed that Prussia was about to subject British vessels and British goods, entering Prussian ports, to the same disadvantages as Prussian ships and Prussian goods were subjected to on entering British ports. The Prussian minister said, 'We shall go on imitating your example. We shall not only impose upon British goods unfavourable discriminating duties, as compared with Prussian, but we shall place upon British ships the same restrictions as you impose upon ours.' And it was the fear of the operation of those restrictive laws on British commerce, that made Mr. Huskisson admit Prussian ships to the same privileges in British ports as your own; and afterwards, the same privileges were extended to the ships of Norway and Sweden. It was, there-

fore, on account of the great changes that have taken place in the commercial system of this country, that you have gradually relaxed these laws. But let us see, and consider maturely and deliberately, whether the recent changes that have been effected in our commercial policy may not render some further change necessary in our navigation laws. And, as it is a paramount consideration not to be on any account discarded, I hope the government will take care that the committee be so constituted, and its objects so directed, that, after a deliberate and dispassionate inquiry into the subject referred to it, its decision may secure as much confidence from the House as the decision of any committee can obtain, and have as much authority with the country as the decision of any parliamentary committee can command."

Mr. Disraeli, who spoke after Sir Robert Peel, did not attempt any defence of the principles of the navigation laws, but contented himself with resisting the proposed inquiry, and rebuking the government for not having had the boldness to originate a measure on the subject, if they thought an alteration of these laws desirable. He contended also, that there had been already sufficient inquiry on the subject.

Lord J. Russell followed, and defended himself from Mr. Disraeli's attack:—

"He supported the motion, because he thought that the navigation laws were a fit subject for inquiry. When he brought forward the suspension of those laws on a former evening, he had brought it forward as a temporary measure, justified by necessity; he did not mean to avail himself of the assent of the House to that measure, to ask it to assent to the inquiry now proposed; but, at the same time, he must observe, that he did not think those laws unalterable. Mr. Huskisson had altered them; and all parties were now agreed, that great evils would have occurred if he had not done so. Concluding, then, from the past, that modifications might be



required in those laws, he stated it as his opinion, that if now, with the various other important measures which the government was bound to introduce, it had proposed an alteration in these laws, it would have been met with this objection—‘Why don’t you appoint a committee to inquire into the subject?’ It would have been very difficult to meet that objection; for he was of opinion, that it would be of great public utility to bring all parties who had any views which they wished to state upon the navigation laws, and to sift them before a committee.”

Upon a division, the motion was carried by 155 against 61, and in a few nights afterwards the committee was appointed. We shall have a future occasion to return to this subject.

## CHAPTER III.

## MINISTERIAL MEASURES FOR THE RELIEF OF IRELAND.

At length, on the 25th of January, the all-engrossing subject—the condition of Ireland—was brought officially under the notice of both houses of parliament; in the Lords by the Marquis of Lansdowne, in moving for certain returns relative to the distress in Ireland; and in the Commons by Lord John Russell, who moved specific measures of relief. It will be sufficient to state what took place in the Lower House. There was no regular discussion in the Lords, and, of course, no manifestation of an intention to oppose the government. Lord Stanley distinctly disavowed such a purpose. “He thought he could assure Lord Lansdowne, that when the measures of the government came to be discussed, they would be received with no disposition to find captious objections, but with every desire to give them a full and fair consideration.

Lord John Russell made an able and impressive speech, which occupied two hours and a half in the delivery, and was listened to with breathless attention by a crowded house, which frequently manifested its sympathy in the painful subject, and in the perplexing responsibility which had devolved upon the government, by warm and encouraging plaudits. In short, never had Premier less ground to complain of coolness or want of support from parliament, than Lord John Russell on this momentous occasion. Wishing to grasp the whole subject,—and in this perhaps

showing himself rather over-ambitious, and certainly running the risk of partial failure, by exciting opposition upon points of extensive and permanent policy,—the noble lord addressed his discourse not only to what was needed for the relief of the existing distress in Ireland, but for the amelioration of her future condition. With regard to the former branch of the subject, he detailed, in the first place, the utterly wretched condition of that kingdom. He described the proceedings under the presentment system and the labour-rate act: and showed that under these enactments, the employment of so many men in unproductive labour had become full of danger, but that the danger would have been much greater had the government confounded that species of labour with independent labour, and so injured the great and important class to which all the labourers generally belonged. He also called attention to the fact, that no public body could sufficiently superintend the employment of so large a number of persons as were engaged under the Board of Works. “The staff itself was liable to abuse, for it consisted of not less than 11,587 persons. The number of persons employed in the previous week was 480,000, and it was probably at that time half a million. No doubt, there was great use in employing these persons, and in furnishing them with labour. Taking each of these persons as providing for four others, that employment found food for 2,000,000 of souls. The expense of this employment was enormous. During the month it had amounted to £700,000 or £800,000. It was impossible to view it without seeing that it must be productive of great concomitant evils. One of them had been, that the labour was inefficiently performed. To remedy that evil, task-work had been substituted; but from task-work another evil had sprung up, and it was this—that many of the labourers obtained by it greater wages than were ever before gained



in Ireland, wages varying from 1s. 4d. to 1s. 10d. a day. The consequence was, that farmers occupying from 20 to 60 acres had obtained tickets from the relief committees, had put their sons on the relief works, had thus received the money which was intended only for the destitute, and, what was worse, had prevented those who were really destitute from receiving it. It therefore appeared desirable to the government to form in certain districts—say, the electoral districts—relief committees, which should be empowered to receive subscriptions, levy rates, and receive donations from the government; that out of the sums thus raised they should purchase food, establish soup-kitchens, and deliver rations from this purchased food to the famishing inhabitants; and that in furnishing that food, they should not look to any particular test of destitution, but should set the labouring men who applied to them to work, either on their own grounds or on those of the neighbouring farmers, so as to earn for themselves some small wages by their own industry. After the government in England had considered this scheme, they had communicated it to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, to the head of the Board of Works, and to the head of the commissariat in that country. These functionaries had received it favourably, and the government was, therefore, determined, by preparatory measures in Ireland, and by a bill to be introduced into parliament, to carry it into effect; and he was sure that the house would be glad to hear that Sir John Burgoyne had consented to superintend its operations for the first three months. With respect to the money which had already been expended, and which was now to be expended, on public works in Ireland, a claim had been advanced, that the whole of it should not be made a burden upon that country. Considering how extensive the calamity was, he thought that it would only be right that the whole burden should not fall on Ireland. He should, therefore,

propose on a future day, that in each succeeding year, as each instalment was paid, one half should be remitted, keeping up the whole debt until one half of it was paid, and then throwing the other half of it on the public. The money already issued for these works had been issued out of the balances now in the Exchequer, charged on the consolidated fund; and he was happy to say that there had been no issue of exchequer bills to meet that expenditure. It had of course placed a burden on the finances of the empire, and he should, therefore, be disabled from bringing forward some propositions for the reduction of the duties on soap, sugar, tea, &c., which he was inclined to have made, and which it was hardly fair that the people of Great Britain should not receive. With respect to the advances made to proprietors who had expressed a desire to make improvements on their estates, under the authority of the Lord Lieutenant's order, government thought that the terms contained in the Treasury minute of the 1st of last December, should be extended to them, and that the time for the repayment of the advances which they had received, should be extended from 10 to 22 years, as in the Drainage act of last session."

Having thus explained the views of government in regard to measures of immediate relief, Lord John Russell proceeded to make another proposal, of which, though he admitted it was "of doubtful tendency," he was inclined to make experiment:—

"He proposed to advance £50,000 (to be repaid on or before the 31st December, 1847) to the proprietors of Ireland, to furnish seed for sowing their lands. He did not intend to advance any part of it to the small cottier-tenants, as it might not be used for the purposes for which it was intended; but he thought that if the advance were made to the proprietors of the soil, the measure might be safe and useful. In stating these propositions to the house, he felt bound to

state, that government could not, and did not, expect to be able to ward off entirely the effects of the awful visitation under which Ireland was now labouring." The measure for the future permanent benefit of Ireland had regard to the drainage and improvement of the soil, towards accomplishing which, it was proposed that assistance, in the shape of pecuniary advances, at easy rates of interest, should be made. In conjunction with these measures, an extension of the poor law was recommended.

With regard to improvements of estates, the noble lord said :—

"The first measure was based on the Drainage act of last session, and on the terms given to the public in the Treasury minute of December last. It was proposed, that where an improvement of an estate was proposed to be made, either by drainage or the reclamation of waste lands, certain advances should be made from the public funds. The usual rate of interest on advances made by the Treasury was 5 per cent.; by the Drainage act of last session it was fixed at  $3\frac{1}{2}$  per cent.; and he now proposed to extend the terms of the Drainage act to the improvements which he had just mentioned. He also proposed, with regard to more general works, to consolidate and amend the Drainage acts now on the statute book. By the present Drainage acts, the proprietors of a district might meet—they might propose to obtain a loan for the improvement of a district by drainage; and, if the plan proposed was approved by the majority, the loan could be made, and the drainage effected. In that case, the drainage was undertaken by the Board of Works. Now, this act was only applicable to the drainage of streams and rivers. He proposed to apply it to other objects, and, therefore, a consolidation and amendment of the acts were necessary. He also proposed, on the same principle on which other great works were proposed by the State, to undertake by the State

the reclamation of waste lands in Ireland. The waste lands of Ireland had been calculated by Sir R. Kane at 4,600,000 acres; government proposed to devote £1,000,000 to the purpose of reclaiming them. It further proposed, that the waste land, if the proprietor were inclined to dispose of it, should be purchased by the public; but if the proprietor refused to improve it, as well as to sell it, that a compulsory power should be lodged in the Commissioners of Woods and Forests to take and cultivate it. Such land, however, must be below a certain value, viz., 2s. 6d. per acre per annum. It is proposed that lands of this nature are only to be improved and reclaimed so far as general operations are concerned—that roads be made through them, that general drainage be effected, and the necessary buildings erected; but that no part of the cultivation of the land take place under the direction of a public department; and that the lands so reclaimed should be divided into small lots, say of 25 acres each, and might either be sold outright at once, or let to a tenant for a certain number of years, to be sold at the end of that time. He expected that great advantage would arise from this plan, for a great many persons who were now driven into despair and crime, owing to the enormous demand now existing for land, would be placed on these reclaimed lands, and would thus be able to obtain a competent living from their labour.”

With regard to the Poor-Law question, the noble lord referred to the report of the Poor-Law Commission of Ireland, which advised, that all persons of a certain class should be relieved, and in that class it included all persons infirm, aged, or permanently disabled. “The government thought it safer to have workhouses erected in Ireland, to allow relief to the destitute able-bodied, as well as to the aged and infirm, and to confine it to the workhouse. It was now its opinion, formed on a general view of Ireland, that the poor-law should be extended. He therefore proposed to bring



in a bill for the more effectual relief of the destitute poor of Ireland, which would enact, that the guardians of the poor be required to give relief, either in or out of the workhouse, to the aged and infirm, and to all who were permanently disabled. This would be the means, first, of enabling the Board of Guardians to use the workhouse as a test of destitution; and, secondly, of enabling them to afford relief to infirm and aged persons at their own homes, with greater satisfaction to the feelings of the people, and with the hope of producing a better working of the law. He also proposed, that when the workhouses were full, the Poor-Law Commissioners should have power to enable boards of guardians to give relief out of the house, to the able-bodied poor. This power must be used with caution. The workhouses ought to be kept as a test of destitution; but there were cases where they could not afford accommodation to all who crowded to their doors, and in such cases aid must be given out of doors—not in money, but in food. Relieving-officers also would be appointed, and in cases of urgent necessity, where there was danger of starvation, must be empowered to take the parties into the workhouses, or to relieve them out of the workhouses until the next meeting of the Board of Guardians, when relief could be afforded according to the general rules. Such were the measures which he proposed to introduce immediately. There were other measures, however, still in the contemplation of government, of which one was a measure for facilitating the sale of encumbered estates. He also proposed to introduce a bill, by which long leasehold tenures, renewable for ever, should be converted into freeholds. The various tenures of land in Ireland were a great evil; and it was a matter worthy of parliament, to consider how far these tenures could be simplified, and the landlord be connected with the tenant and the labourer, as in England. It was owing to this want of connection between them in

Ireland, that it was almost impossible to discover who was the party on whom, in the urgent distress of the country, the duties of property became obligatory. Under the second head of public works came fisheries; but he had no definite proposition to submit to parliament on that subject at present. In the course of last autumn a large supply of fish had been caught on the west coast of Ireland, but, from want of salt, it had been thrown on the land for manure, instead of being cured for the food of man. He trusted that before the end of the session he should be prepared with a bill on that subject. There was another subject—emigration—on which he intended to make no proposition, though extravagant expectations, which never could be realized, were entertained respecting it in Ireland. Pauper families could not be removed, so as to produce any sensible effect on the population, either by public or by private means. This point was to be considered. If you were greatly to assist emigration, and to convey a million of men beyond the ocean, what funds and means are there in the countries to which you remove them? If, by a large addition to the burdens of the country, we were to remove hundreds of thousands of men to the United States, that government would complain, and justly, that we were casting upon them paupers whom we ought to maintain ourselves. If we were to remove them to our own colonies, the same complaints would be made by them—we should reduce them to ruin, and create beggars in abundance, where we now had industrious and happy settlers.” His lordship then described the measures which he had adopted, when he held the seals of the colonial department, to promote emigration by taking charge of the emigrant at the port of his disembarkation, and by conveying him thence to the field of employment. He showed that there had been, in consequence, a large increase in the amount of emigration during the years 1845 and 1846, and affirmed that, under such



circumstances, he should be afraid of giving a stimulus to further emigration. There were, however, some difficulties in the way of emigration contained in the Passenger act which he intended to remove, but he could give no hope of an extensive scheme of emigration. He knew not whether the calculation of Sir R. Kane was a sober one; but that eminent individual maintained, that there were such extensive agricultural resources—to say nothing of mineral resources—in Ireland, that it could maintain seventeen millions of inhabitants without difficulty. He (Lord John Russell) was himself of opinion, that if a good system of agriculture were introduced into Ireland—if anything like permanent security were afforded for the investment of capital—if the proprietors would improve their lands—and if their tenants and labourers would co-operate with them, the present population of Ireland was not excessive. He did not think that either the fertility of the land, or the strength or industry of the inhabitants, was at fault. There had been faults; there had been defects: happy will it be for us, if we lay the foundation for the cure of those defects; happy will it be for the Irish themselves, if they take for their maxim, “Help yourself, and then heaven will help you;” for then he trusted that they would find that there had been some “uses” in “adversity.”

Lord John Russell concluded by moving for leave to bring in a bill to render valid certain acts done under the authority of the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, and a bill for the improvement of private estates in Ireland.

The motion was agreed to after a short conversation, in the course of which a general concurrence was expressed in the immediate measures of relief proposed, though Lord G. Bentinck remarked upon the absence of all reference to the subject of railways, and intimated his intention of introducing a measure to promote the application of English capital to such purposes in Ireland.

The bills passed rapidly through their subsequent stages, but were marked by few incidents of interest. They seemed to be looked upon from the outset as *faits accomplis*. On the adjourned debate, on the second reading, February 2, Sir Robert Peel made a cautious speech, in which, whilst concurring in the immediate scheme of relief, he studiously avoided pledging himself to measures of future policy. As a specimen of the calm common sense which was the prevailing characteristic of his mind—and beyond the limits of which it was at all times difficult, if not impossible, for him to soar—the speech was one of the most remarkable he ever delivered. The amazing distress of the people of Ireland could excite him to no enthusiasm; his sole desire was, that, in attempting to remedy one gigantic evil, a greater should not be incurred and perpetuated.

“I concur,” he said, “with the right honourable gentleman, that it would be much more advantageous to discuss those measures that are intended to effect permanent improvements in the condition and state of the people of Ireland, when we shall be in possession of them, than to obstruct the progress of the present bill for the purpose of entering upon a general debate. At the same time, I am not surprised that honourable gentlemen connected with Ireland, after witnessing the scenes which they have witnessed, after having had to struggle with the difficulties with which they have had to contend—feeling, as they must, the deepest interest in the welfare of their native country, and the deepest sympathy with those who are suffering from the terrible calamity with which it is afflicted—I am not surprised, I say, that they should avail themselves of the earliest opportunity to submit their views to the house with regard to the operation of the measures proposed by her Majesty’s government. But I, for one, not having the same motives for entering into discussion which they have, feel it of so much

importance that we should at once enact those measures which are intended to meet the difficulties of the present time, that I am unwilling to oppose any impediment in the way of passing them. I am prepared to grant, as I think they are entitled to ask, full and complete indemnity to her Majesty's government for the responsibilities which they have assumed in the crisis through which they have passed. I think, however, it might be advantageous with reference to the future, that in the bill which guaranties this indemnity, an indemnity which parliament is so willing to concede, there should be a full explanation of the circumstances under which the responsibility had been assumed by government. Observe, I entirely approve of the assumption of that responsibility; yet still, where the executive government, however justifiable the act may be, do undertake to supersede the ordinary operation of the law, I doubt whether it is not for the public advantage, that all the circumstances connected with that assumption of power by the executive, should be fully set forth. With regard to the bill which constitutes relief-committees, and which is intended to make a total alteration in the system under which relief is now granted, I am also willing to give my assent at once to that measure. I think the evils of the present system are very great, and that the sooner you apply a remedy the better. I cannot help thinking there is great danger, considering how nearly we are approaching that period of the spring when it will be impossible to employ labour upon reproductive works, with due regard to the harvest of the next year—I think, I say, the sooner we enable the government to make a material alteration in the present system, and promote labour by applying it to the present cultivation of the soil, the greater is the prospect of a diminution of the present difficulty. I think, therefore, the sooner we make an alteration in the present system, the better will it be for the future condition



of Ireland.” Alluding to a statement made in the course of the debate by Mr. Labouchere, the right honourable baronet went on to say:—“I am rather surprised at the right honourable gentleman (Mr. Labouchere) underrating the dangers that arise from the application of labour to what are called ‘public works.’ I beg to remind the right honourable gentleman, that he himself, in August last, speaking of the operations of the late government, when there were not more than 60,000 or 70,000 men employed on public works, then stated, that very great inconvenience arose in Ireland from diverting labour from its ordinary course. If that were in August last, when not more than 60,000 or 70,000 men were employed, how much greater must the inconvenience be to the cultivation of the soil, when there are not less than half a million of persons employed on what are called public works? I am quite ready to give wide discretionary power to the government for the purpose of altering that system, but having read these two volumes (returns presented on the previous morning) so far as it was possible for me to do, considering the short time they have been issued, I must say, the officers who have been engaged in carrying this system into operation, are entitled to the greatest credit. I do not wish to compliment them at the expense of the proprietors of Ireland. I dare say there may be much truth in what the right honourable gentleman says, yet, at the same time, I think we ought to make great allowances for the difficulties with which the government of Ireland have had to contend. When I hear the account—and I believe the accurate account—which the noble lord (Lord Clements) gave to-night, of his having devoted ten years to a struggle with great difficulties in attempting to improve the condition of those with whom he is connected, and who are dependent upon him; when I hear the accounts of other persons

like himself, all lamenting that they had been attended with so little success; so far from blaming that noble lord and others, for want of success, I give them all due praise and honour for having persevered. I give him, and all those like him, the highest praise for having set aside all the temptations of absenteeism, and, although they have failed in realizing all they hoped to attain, I think the responsibility of failure does not rest with them. I must also say, that in no country in the world has that sex—which always stands foremost in every work of charity—I venture to say, speaking of Irish ladies and Irish females, that in no country in the world could that sex exhibit greater instances of devotion and of sacrifice—not only pecuniary sacrifice—but of the sacrifice of health and time, and of all their worldly interests, in attempting to mitigate the evils which they saw around them. And I must also say that I give credit—and I was sorry to hear any reflection thrown upon them—to the subordinate officers of the Board of Works. I believe that the spirit which has animated them, and all who were employed with them, has been inspired by the untiring activity, the integrity, and the devotedness of Mr. Trevelyan, under whose immediate superintendence their operations have been conducted. I do not believe that that gentleman has been influenced by any spirit of hostility towards Ireland—far from it: for who could suppose that any man, with all the other duties which devolve upon him, could have devoted so much of time and attention in attempting to mitigate the evils with which Ireland is afflicted, unless influenced, not only by a high sense of public duty, but also by a most earnest desire to advance the best interests of the country? But having read these volumes, having seen the firmness, the resolution, the intelligence evinced by so many men, all on a sudden performing functions to which they were strange, and duties the most arduous,

even when attempts were made to intimidate them, and where but little encouragement was offered them,—I say, seeing all this, I think it quite right that they should be invested with a full discretionary power in carrying out the new system. It is impossible to read these volumes without seeing that Sir Randolph Routh, the officers of the Board of Works, the commissariat department, and all the officers employed, both superiors and inferiors, deserve the highest credit for their industry, their intelligence, their integrity; for their devotion of every faculty both of body and of mind, without thought of themselves, to the performance of their arduous duties. I believe, therefore, that they should be invested with a wide discretionary power—that an attempt to regulate their proceedings by minute legislative regulations, would be unwise. I repeat, that the best hope we have of reseuing our friends from the evils of the present system, will be by means of a wide discretionary power; and I say, we have sufficient proofs of the intelligence of those employed, to entrust them with it. With respect to the other measures proposed by the noble lord, which have regard to the permanent condition of Ireland, I fear I should be doing an injustice to him, if I were to enter into them now. Those are not the important measures we have to dispose of now. By far the most important of those measures are two or three of which we are not yet in possession, and of the principles of which, therefore, it is impossible to form a judgment. I will venture to say, that that bill which shall enable those who are in possession of encumbered property to sell that property, is of ten times more importance, as bearing on the permanent condition of Ireland, than those measures which we are now discussing. But, as I have already said, we are not yet in possession of them, and I think we should only prejudice the consideration of those most important measures by now explaining our respective views with regard



to them. Then, again, with respect to the cultivation of waste land, I will only so far allude to that measure as to say, that I do hope the noble lord will pause before he undertakes to expend so much public money as that measure must involve. At the same time, I thought the honourable member for High Wycombe (Mr. Osborne) greatly exaggerated the noble lord's views upon that subject, for I did not understand the noble lord to make any proposal to reclaim such an amount as 4,600,000 acres of waste land. I entreat the noble lord to bear in mind the exhortation which at the close of his eloquent and impressive speech, he gave to the Irish proprietors—to help themselves, and that then they might depend upon external aid. Now I advise the noble lord to carry that principle into effect; that is, I would advise him to try, if possible, to teach the Irish proprietors to act independently of the aid of the government. Let us be liberal, let us be just to Ireland; but depend on it, we shall encumber Ireland, we shall paralyze her exertions, if we teach her to rely too much upon government-assistance. And it is true of the cultivation of land, as it is true of the feeding of the people, that it must depend upon the energies of the people, and not upon any assistance from the government. If we look at inland navigations, or at model farms conducted by a government, the result is only to deter people from entering into the same expense. For if you take the expense of superintendence, and of the complicated machinery involved when the work is done by government-agents, and compare it with work done by individual enterprise, where every penny is watched, where not an agent is employed more than is absolutely wanted, and where there is personal superintendence by the person the most interested, you will see that that is the way in which permanent improvements are made. That is the way best to make great outfalls, and to facilitate

the drainage of private estates; and I trust that you will facilitate the operation of drainage by paying attention to the means of making that drainage effectual. With respect to the cultivation of bogs and waste lands in Ireland, I cannot help feeling, that with the high prices that prevail, and with the encouragement there has been to employ private capital in land, it will employ itself; for I cannot help thinking, if the noble lord's bill, permitting the sales of encumbered estates, shall be successful, that we may depend upon it, if those speculations are to be profitable, that private enterprise will be employed to make them profitable. If they are not to be profitable, it is only throwing away the public money to undertake them. Now, I trust my readiness to give perfect indemnity to the government, my readiness to give them full discretionary power, and the tone in which I am speaking, will show that I am actuated by anything but party spirit, or hostility towards the government. At the same time, with respect to these important measures, we cannot perform our duty unless we state with calmness and honesty what our views are, more especially with respect to measures that are to be permanent. I hope, therefore, that the noble lord will pause before he interferes too extensively in reclaiming the waste lands of Ireland. He has plenty of other duties to perform before he undertakes to be an improver of Irish bogs; and I fear if he do so, he will involve himself in difficulties from which his ingenuity will scarcely extricate him. With respect, also, to the poor-law, I will not say a single word. It is a subject of vast importance, and it were better to defer the discussion of it until we see the measure. But, as it is of the utmost importance that we should give an assurance to the government of indemnity, I trust I may be allowed to express a hope, that, if the debate should not terminate to-night, we may set to work as soon as possible with the new

system, by which the present defective one is to be superseded."

On the motion for going into committee on the bill, on the 8th February, Mr. O'Connell, the veteran, but health-stricken champion of Ireland, made a speech, which, though it was in many parts scarcely audible, caused a deep and melancholy sensation in the House. It is memorable as the last speech which the honourable and learned gentleman ever made, either in the House of Commons, or elsewhere; for he died at Genoa, on his way to Rome, on the 15th of May ensuing.

Mr. O'Connell began by expressing his opinion regarding the Irish measures ministers had introduced, and, after stating his objection in principle to the grant of out-door relief, contended that the fault found with some other propositions of government had exceeded any just decree of reprobation. He alluded in particular to the Labour-rate act, and declared, for his own part, that he was ready to vote for any measure that would give an additional meal to his suffering countrymen. With regard to the measure before the House, he might remark, that members were not even yet sufficiently aware of the horrors of the situation of the Irish people. He was convinced that most of those who heard him did not understand the accumulation of misery at present endured by his countrymen. He gave some details regarding a particular district, the name of which was inaudible from the lowness of tone in which he spoke, and stated it as his distinct conviction, that unless immediate relief were afforded, 25 per cent. of the present population of Ireland would perish. They would perish of famine and disease, unless the House did something speedy and efficacious—not doled out in small sums—not in private and individual subscriptions, but by some great act of national generosity, calculated upon a broad and liberal

scale. If this course were not pursued, parliament would be responsible for the loss of 25 per cent. of the population of Ireland. He assured the House most solemnly, that he was not exaggerating; he could establish all he said by many and most painful proofs; and the necessary result must be typhus fever, which in fact had broken out, and was desolating whole districts; he believed, he added, that it left alive only one in ten that it attacked. This fearful disorder ere long would spread to the upper classes; the inhabitants of England would not escape its visitations, for it would be brought over by the miserable wretches who escaped from the other side of the channel. The calamity would be scattered over the whole empire, and no man would be safe from it. He repeated, that two millions of human beings would be destroyed, if relief were not immediately and effectually afforded. It had been asked, why the rich Irish did not relieve the poor? They had relieved them. It would be seen by the reports already before the House, that a large body of the Irish people were always on the verge of starvation. Another report, more recently made, had confirmed this statement, and established that in ordinary years great numbers were in destitution. But the destruction of the potato crop had occasioned a positive annihilation of food, and the people were starving in shoals, in hundreds—aye, in thousands and millions. Parliament was bound, then, to act not only liberally, but generously—to find out the means of putting a stop to this terrible disaster. It was asserted that the Irish landlords did not do their duty. Several of them had done their duty—others had not; and considering the extraordinary exigency of the case, his plan was to arm government with more real power, to apply to the purpose all the sums they deemed necessary. They ought instantly to carry out the mode of relief they thought necessary; responsible indeed to the House, but not fettered by the



strict letter of the law. He wanted to see the House generously confiding in ministers, let them be chosen from which side of the House they might. The facts, as he well knew, were more terrific than had been yet stated. The necessity was most urgent. He had not said one word to produce irritation, he had not uttered one word of reproach. He would not do so, but would call upon parliament to appoint commissioners to make inquiries in all parts of Ireland, into the circumstances of those who were able to give—to specify and to name them, and to assess them for so much as they ought to contribute. A decisive measure of that sort should have his hearty support. Let every man's means be ascertained, and give the tribunal which he proposed to erect, the power of inflicting taxation. To inflict taxation without representation has not been unusual in Ireland, and the grand jury system was one of taxation without representation. The patience of the people of Ireland could not be too much admired. It had been exhibited on all occasions; and the forbearance of the lower orders, considering their almost intolerable privations, was wonderful. It was, however, possible that they might be driven from misery to madness; and, as to the levying of rates, it was at present impossible. As regarded the reimbursement of England for her advances, he contended that she would be no loser at the present crisis, any more than she had been on former occasions. He maintained that England had been a gainer by her loans to Ireland. He then went on to describe once more the lamentably destitute condition of the people, afflicted with poverty and visited by disease, and again called upon parliament to interpose generously, munificently—he would say enormously, for the rescue of his country. “Recollect,” he said, “how encumbered is the property of Ireland; how many of her estates are in Chancery, how many are in the hands of trustees. She is in your hands—she is in your power. If you don't save



her, she can't save herself; and I solemnly call on you to recollect, that I predict with the sincerest conviction that one-fourth of her population will perish, unless you come to their relief."

The measure thus urged passed rapidly, and without opposition, through both Houses of Parliament. In the Upper House, Lord Brougham, it is true, vindicated his character for consistency, by making a few observations upon the mischievous tendency of any attempts, on the part of government, to administer relief to the distressed portions of the community. "He contended, that it was not the business of a government to provide a whole people with food or labour, but to protect the rights of the people and the rights of property, and afford facilities to every man for making the best use of his wealth or his labour. The government should not go beyond that rule, except under the most extraordinary circumstances. Even then it would be necessary to proceed with extreme caution, otherwise there was great danger of making matters worse, and of doing harm instead of good. Some good had been done under the Labour-rate act, but the grossest abuses had been perpetrated. It was lamentable, that 500,000 persons, commanded by a staff of 11,000, should have been employed to no purpose but to do mischief, either by destroying the roads, or destroying farm-labour, in consequence of getting the men to work on the roads. If we persisted in the same line of policy, we should habituate the Irish people not to stand alone, but to require artificial support, and the evil consequences would remain long after the famine was over." Lord Ellenborough expressed great distrust of the measure, which was to give food to the people of Ireland, to be paid for out of the hard-earned money of this country, without any prospect of a return. Lord Radnor also entered a protest against

the measure in the Journals of the House of Lords, in which the arguments were directed against the whole principle of any, and every poor law.

These measures, as already observed, were only of a temporary character, and adapted only to meet the emergency and requirements of the moment. Shortly after their passing, however, Lord John Russell redeemed his promise of introducing measures of more general and permanent import; namely, one for the Improvement of Landed Estates in Ireland; the other for the permanent Relief of the Poor in Ireland, involving the great principle of outdoor relief. But before we proceed to the consideration of these subjects, it will be necessary to notice a prior measure introduced by Lord George Bentinck, for the promotion of Railways in Ireland, which was warmly discussed, and the division upon which avowedly involved not only the progress of the ministerial measures, but the fate of the ministry itself.

## CHAPTER IV

## LORD GEORGE BENTINCK'S IRISH RAILWAY SCHEME.

AT this period, the "railway mania," as it was very appropriately called, which had been attended with so much folly, and juggling, and gambling, had subsided to a great extent. Yet the dividends paid upon established lines still so much exceeded the interest which could be made upon money either in the funds, or in safe commercial investments, that a large number of persons thought the system was susceptible of extension, particularly upon the main channel lines of intercommunication, both with advantage to the public, and with every prospect of an eventual return upon the capital expended.

Ireland was obviously a field in which, as little had been done, much remained which might be undertaken in this department of enterprise. The only question with those who entertained no doubt of the eventual success of such works, was, how the capital could be procured in the meantime for their construction, there being an old prejudice in the minds of capitalists against Irish investments. But in the face of this prejudice, the government had for many years recognized the principle of making advances from the public treasury, at a small rate of interest, upon works which should be approved of for the purpose by the Commissioners of Public Works; and in such advances, railways had shared, to a very considerable extent, within the previous two or three years, without objection, and hitherto without cause for regret.

Such having been the case—and the principle of according grants of public money to support works of private enterprise having been admitted, and, moreover, the preference of railway works to other works of private enterprise having been generally conceded;—it was not to be surprised, that a man of a spirited and daring temperament, whose experience of business and of public affairs had not been sufficiently long or intimate to produce a habit of caution indispensable to the statesman, should have adopted the advocacy of a scheme of advances upon a large scale, towards an object which had hitherto been occasionally aided by contributions of a limited extent. Lord George Bentinck did not perceive, that such advances, in their very nature, were in direct opposition to the sound principles of political economy, and that they were afforded to meet exceptional and extraordinary cases; whereas, by increasing such advances, to the extent of no less than £16,000,000, as he proposed, the exception would, with fatal certainty, have become the rule, and private enterprise, effectually discouraged, would have been driven out of the market.

Moreover, it will be seen from the passages which we proceed to extract from Lord George Bentinck's statements, that although his informants, who supplied him with arguments and statistics on this subject, were men personally mixed up with railway matters, and intimately concerned in the management of their affairs, yet that the estimates they formed of railway profits, and which the noble mover put forward to the house as absolute *data*, were very much beyond the truth, as the subsequent history of railway stock has unequivocally established. We shall make no further comment upon this point, however, which has already been attended with so many painful discussions, and so many not very creditable exposures. It will be sufficient in this place,



considering calmly all points of the case, as we are at liberty to do—to congratulate the country that Lord George Bentinck's enormous project for railway works, and a railway board, in Ireland, was rejected by the common sense of the House of Commons.

The following is an abstract of his speech on the occasion ; which few persons, possessed of any experience of railway property, will read without a feeling of regret, that a man, with so many estimable qualities as he possessed, should ever have imagined himself to be a statesman. After claiming the indulgence of the House, he acknowledged, in complimentary terms, the obligations he was under to the Lord Mayor of York (Mr. Hudson), Mr. R. Stevenson, and Mr. Laing, for their assistance in the preparation of his plan. He then proceeded to draw a comparison between the actual state of Ireland and that of England in 1842, contending that the present more flourishing condition of English labourers was not to be attributed to any free-trade measures, but to the employment of the people in the construction of railways. As regarded Ireland, he found that there had been passed acts of parliament for 1,522 miles of railway ; and although some of these acts had passed so long since as eleven years previously, 123 miles of railway had only been completed, and 164 more were only in course of completion ; while in England and Scotland 2,600 miles of railway had been completed, and new acts were demanded for 4,600 miles more. Lord G. Bentinck then stated, that the population of Ireland, considered with reference to the number of acres, was pretty nearly the same as that of England ; and population, his honourable friend (Mr. Hudson) would assure them, was the first element of success in railway enterprise ; and if they told him that the population of Ireland were incapable of travelling from want of means, he must answer, that it was



not so. By a return he had there, he found that the number of passengers who travelled by the Irish (compared with those who travelled by the English or Scotch) railways, far exceeded in number. The fact was, that whilst, in the Scotch and English railways, the average number of passengers travelling every month was about 11,800; on a railway in Ulster the number was no less than 21,700. He attributed it somewhat to fashion, and somewhat to want of confidence, which deterred the English capitalists from embarking money in Irish railways, of which there were now  $229\frac{1}{2}$  miles stopped for want of funds.

The proposition he had to make to the House was, that for every £100 properly expended upon railways, government should guaranty three-and-a-half per cent. With the indulgence of the House, he should be able to show that, with the restrictions he should propose, the security would be amply sufficient. There sat beside him the chairman of the management of 1,700 miles of railway (Mr. Hudson), who had the conduct of £45,000,000, and who was prepared to pledge his commercial character, that government could not lose one single farthing by this proposition. The honourable gentleman, the Lord Mayor of York, would tell the house, that the worst railway under his direction would afford 7 per cent. security to government; and he himself would be prepared to show, that the worst railway in Belgium or Scotland would amply pay for the money expended on them. Well, then, he had said that his proposition was, that government should lend out at interest, money at the rate at which they borrowed. He believed that the actual interest was £3. 6s. 8d. per cent.; but he would assume it to be  $3\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. Government were to take the security on the entire loan. There would then be £7 on £200. His honourable friend behind him (Mr. Hudson) reminded him that he ought to have stated, that this security of £100 pro-

perly expended, for every £200 which they asked, was a security unquestioned. He proposed to make the railway commissioners a board which should be responsible to both houses of parliament—an efficient board, for the purpose of dealing out those loans to the companies. He proposed to throw the entire responsibility upon those commissioners; and unless they should report that the railway at once promised to be beneficial to the country, the state was not to be called upon to advance any money. In introducing that measure, it was not his wish to make any proposition, either in hostility or rivalry to the government of his noble friend. He assured the House publicly—privately he pledged his honour to his noble friend—that they (the noble lord and his party) sought no advantage for themselves by the carrying of that measure. If, by a measure which cost the country nothing, they could, for five years, give good wages to 550,000 of the population, it must be admitted that he went a great way in assisting his noble friend to carry out his New Poor-law Amendment act. But he now came to a part of the measure which was exceedingly important—namely, its bearing upon the public revenue. It had been whispered about, that his proposal to raise sixteen millions of money on loan would disturb the money-market. He (Lord George Bentinck) did not believe that raising sixteen millions, to be spent over four years, would have the slightest evil effect; and, if he wanted confirmation of this opinion, he could obtain it from his honourable friend the member for Westmoreland (Alderman Thomson), who, as a bank-director, had assured him, that such an application of capital would not have the least appreciable effect upon the money-market. The conduct of the people of Ireland had been most admirable. He had no fear of outbreak in Ireland; “fill their bellies, and clothe their backs; give them good beef and mutton, and bread, and strong ale; give them good broadcloth from Yorkshire; give their wives

cottons from Manchester, and ribbons from Coventry; fill their pockets with English gold; cement the Union with sympathy, support, and kindness, and he would answer for it with his head, that the Irish would even show themselves conspicuous for loyalty to their sovereign, and warm attachment and good faith to their fellow-subjects."

Lord George Bentinck's motion was seconded by Mr. Hudson; and Lord John Russell, in the face of a considerable party who were evidently prepared to support it, perhaps not with the same generous views towards the government, as those professed by the noble mover, did not think it prudent to resist the introduction of the proposed measure, although he "gave his noble friend distinct warning, that he did not conceive the government would be warranted in permitting its further progress." For this course of conduct, the premier was severely censured by Mr. Roebuck, who made a smart, telling, uncompromising speech.

Mr. Roebuck objected to the bill *in limine*. The noble member for Lynn proposed that this country should employ 16,000,000 in a certain speculation in Ireland. Now, where the employment of capital was left to private speculation, it consisted of only the surplus wealth of individuals invested on their own responsibility, but the noble lord's plan was to tax the people of England, in order to employ capital in Ireland. Had he not a right to ask English gentlemen sitting in that House, whether they would allow their poorer constituents to be so taxed? And yet the English members were accused of hard-heartedness, if they did not at once fall in with the vagaries of the noble lord, who had pledged something—his head, he believed—that he would fill the bellies of the Irish people with mutton and ale—would clothe the men with the cloths of Yorkshire, and the women with the cottons of Manchester, and bedizen them with the ribbons of Coventry. The noble lord was to complete his

work by filling their pockets with English gold. And yet he (Mr. Roebuck) was to be accused of malignancy, if he did not at once accept the proposition of the noble lord. If these demands for Ireland were persisted in, he should come forward, and make a claim for the English people. The noble lord's plan would not avail as a remedy against the existing distress; the object of it was merely to take advantage of that distress, to press the demands and advance the interests of the Irish landlords.

After a long and somewhat animated discussion, the bill was brought in, and read a first time. The debate on the second reading was adjourned twice, and was one of the warmest contests of the session; the utmost interest was taken in the result, upon which, as some supposed, the fate of the ministry depended. Amongst others, the measure was supported by Mr. Disraeli, who contended, that, in the case of Ireland, "the evils they had to complain of were social and economical, and could not be met with any mere political panacea;" and justified a departure from ordinary commercial principles. In reference to the personal position of some of those who had promoted the introduction of the measure, Mr. Disraeli made one or two observations, to which subsequent events give interest:—

The proposal of his noble friend had met, not with an able, but with a zealous opposition. The initial objection offered to it by the right honourable gentleman, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, was based upon the pursuits and assertions of some of those whose names were on the back of the bill. One was largely connected with railways, and another was interested to an equal degree in iron. He was willing to admit the magical fascinations of an engrossing pursuit—and that frequently, when men least suspected it, their judgments were more or less influenced by their



interests. But no one would think of imputing anything like dishonourable or corrupt motives to the gentlemen in question, and he was certain that the right honourable gentleman had no intention of doing so. But if such an imputation lay against private members of the House, it was quite possible that they might find that public avocations had the same influence in distorting the judgment—a suspicion into which he and others might be naturally led, from finding three chancellors of the exchequer getting up one after another, and resisting his noble friend's scheme on grounds connected with finance. Mr. Disraeli concluded by contending, that most of their arguments were unsound, and that, on an average, about 57 per cent. of the whole outlay on railways had been expended in England, France, and Belgium, in the payment of wages to labourers on the works.

On the third night of the debate, Sir Robert Peel made one of those masterly speeches, ripe and full in information, sound in argument, lucid in arrangement, and clear in delivery; for which, upon all subjects involving the practical details of business and finance, he had long stood unrivalled. He began by stating, that “he wished to discuss the question in the spirit and temper befitting the magnitude of the evils that pressed upon Ireland, and the magnitude of the danger that threatened her. As the noble lord who introduced the bill had professed his intention to bring it forward in no spirit of party, but as merely ancillary to the measures proposed by the government, the vote the House was about to give involved in no degree any consideration of the consequences such a vote would have upon the ministry. The proposal before the House was, that the credit of the government should be pledged to the possible amount of £16,000,000. That justified a reference to the financial condition of the country. As far as the year ending the 5th of January last,



the revenue was gratifying enough, having exceeded the anticipations of the late Chancellor of the Exchequer by the amount of £2,800,000. But the revenue of the coming year could hardly be expected to be so large as the past; and the expenditure of the coming year would, according to the estimates already laid before the House, exceed the past; therefore, he thought that, assuming the expenditure necessary for Ireland, under the measures proposed by the government, to be nine or eleven millions, he would not be far wrong in anticipating a deficiency, at the end of the current financial year, of seven or eight millions. With, then, the three-and-a-quarter per cents. at 93, with exchequer bills scarcely at a premium, with our relations with foreign powers justifying at least anxiety, would it be advisable to contract engagements spread over four years, to the amount of sixteen millions sterling? In his opinion it would not—for it could not be done, except by a vigorous increase of taxation upon all parts of the country, or by the issue of exchequer bills, or by the contraction of a loan—all of which modes were liable to great objections.”

His arguments for the financial considerations involved, were remarkably clear and convincing:—

“At this period, then, sir, with these prospects before us, I inquire also what is the present state of that which is significantly and familiarly known by the name of the money-market? My reference to that may possibly excite a smile; but the money-market, in the sense in which I use the term, means neither more nor less than this—‘What are the terms on which the public can borrow that which is necessary (if a loan is necessary) for the purpose of meeting the public exigencies?’ A loan for that purpose is significant of taxation—it is a burden on the people, which must be provided for in some way or other. Well, then, I find that the three per cents., which, a short time since, were

at not less than par—which were, I think, a short time since, even more than at the £100; I think they have been so for the last few years. Well, I believe at the present time they are quoted at not more than £91. I find there has been a fall in the value of funded property, even within the last six or seven months, to the amount of not less than five per cent. So much for the funded property. Let us look, now, to the state of the unfunded debt. I find, on the very day on which I am speaking, it is almost a question whether or not some description of exchequer bills are not actually at a discount—at any rate, they are not more than 4s. or 5s. premium; and, of course, the state of the unfunded debt is a subject of material importance in discussing this question. Then, look next to the aspect of foreign affairs. I am ready to put confidence in the assurance given by her Majesty on the first day of the session, that her Majesty confidently relied upon continued maintenance of tranquillity. I heard that assurance with great satisfaction; but my confidence in it was, I confess, somewhat shaken, when I recollected what was the present state of our relations towards that great country, with regard to which, we have had discussions necessarily consequent upon what has recently transpired in Spain. My confidence, also, in the general assurance of tranquillity, was somewhat diminished when I recollected that, with respect to three of the great powers of Europe, her Majesty was obliged to accompany that expression of her confidence by a frank and positive declaration that they had been guilty of a manifest violation of the treaty of Vienna. Sir, it is, then, at this period—with the three per cents. at 91—with exchequer bills scarcely at a premium—with our relations to foreign powers at least justifying a degree of anxiety, though, I trust, not of apprehension—it is at this moment that the noble lord (Lord George Bentinck) calls on us to authorize the government to contract engagements which, spread over four years,

may amount to the sum of sixteen millions. Independent of those engagements, I contemplate, also, the necessity of providing, in some way or other, for the deficit of six or seven millions, to which I have already referred. But how is that deficit to be met? Let me assume that there will be a deficit of six or seven millions, on account of this Irish calamity, in the year ending the 5th of April, 1848, what means has the noble lord at his disposal for providing for that deficit? I know of no means of doing so, except by drawing on those balances, the amount of which, it is of the utmost convenience to the public to preserve. I know of no other means of providing for that assumed deficiency, excepting either by a vigorous effort of direct taxation, to be visited on all parts, I presume, of the United Kingdom, or by the issue of exchequer bills, in this doubtful state of the unfunded debt; or by the contraction of a loan to the amount which may be required, engendering, possibly, the necessity—not, of course, of direct taxation to an amount sufficient to make up the total deficiency, but merely to provide for the interest which the payment of that loan may require. That is the condition in which it is apparent, independently of the proposition of the noble lord, the country would be placed. I am sure the noble lord will acquit me of referring to this part of the subject, for the purpose of recrimination. It is a necessity imposed by a great unforeseen public calamity; and be he who he may, who is the finance minister of this country, it is apparent that an equal necessity would have possibly been involved, whoever had held that responsible position. Supposing, then, avoiding direct taxation, I give no opinion whatever on the alternative courses which I have suggested as the possible course to be pursued; but, supposing the noble lord should think it right to resort, either to a loan or to the issue of exchequer bills—that is to say, for the two expedients are really identical in this respect—suppose the



government should resort to the expedient of borrowing money—then, I am compelled to ask, is it just or prudent, under the present circumstances, that the noble lord shall increase the difficulties of his financial position, by entering into engagements to the amount of £16,000,000, to be spread over a period of four years? Sir, I must totally and entirely differ from those who contend that you can pledge the public credit of this country, for the purpose of promoting commercial enterprise, without subjecting the country to a great risk of loss. It is quite clear, that if, in addition to that six or seven millions which the noble lord may find it necessary to provide, he has also to provide four millions during the present year, and twelve millions during the three next years, depend upon it, at once you will so surcharge the market with unfunded debt, that there must be a positive addition to the interest paid on exchequer bills. Why, what is the public credit of the state? The public credit is a part of the national property—the public credit is one of the elements of our financial strength, and you cannot possibly appropriate a great portion of that public credit to the encouragement of commercial enterprise, without, to the same extent, fettering your commerce. It is quite impossible; and the application of the national credit is, I say, very much the same in principle as the application of direct taxation to the encouragement of mercantile affairs. Depend upon it, that a very considerable application of the public credit to the encouragement of commercial enterprise, at a time when other great exertions are necessary, entails great public expense, and engenders the necessity for increased taxation. And therefore, sir, it does, in my opinion, become absolutely necessary to consider whether or no the application of such a sum as sixteen millions is required for the purpose of mitigating the present calamity, and of averting the future danger of Ireland; and whether or no any good to be derived

from such a measure is equivalent to the risk run from such an application of funds."

He then went on to examine the details of the measure, and objected strongly to the power proposed to be vested in the board of railway commissioners—an irresponsible body—who, upon merely certifying that such or such a railway would afford beneficial employment for labour, could oblige the treasury to make advances, leaving that department no discretion in the matter. The bill proposed that the treasury should advance £40 for every £20 advanced to the shareholders, coupled with an assurance, that for thirty years there should be no demand for repayment of the capital so advanced. He (Sir Robert Peel) was disposed to make the greatest sacrifices in order to give employment to the poor in Ireland, but he thought that this benefit to the shareholders in Irish railroads could not possibly be justified on such grounds. The right honourable baronet then continued :—

"The honourable member near me (Mr. Hudson) spoke with great pride and satisfaction of the clause in the bill which enables shareholders to pay the amount of their liabilities out of the advances. How is this to be done? Is not each shareholder bound by his liabilities to pay up on his shares, he having incurred those debts? But is the first application of public money to be for the purpose of enabling shareholders to pay off their liabilities? because, as the honourable member for Sunderland says, it would make the coast clear, and be for the public advantage, by getting rid of prior engagements. If I understand him, the creditor of a railway company can demand payment from his debtor, of debts due on account of such companies; and I also understand, that the very first application of this money is to give payment to the creditors of railroad companies in Ireland—such creditors, mark, not being shareholders. Now, the



shareholders in other railway companies borrow money often at five, or, perhaps, six per cent., and give the most unexceptionable securities for that advance. But what are those shareholders, to whom the honourable gentleman alludes, to offer as security? He says, 'See what I have done!—such is the state of the money-market in Great Britain, that I raised a capital of ten millions within three or four months, and have lost nothing.' But he goes on—'Don't suppose,' says my honourable friend, 'that I am an Irish railway shareholder. I will give you'—and I believe him—'my advice and assistance to enable you to carry out this plan, but I derive no benefit from it, for I have no interest in Irish railways, and, in fact, I have nothing to do with them.' I ask my honourable friend, Is it not a fact, that great numbers of the shareholders in Irish railways are Englishmen? and is it not possible, I ask, that members of English railroad companies may have shares in Irish railroad companies? The honourable member for Radnorshire said, to-night, as an argument in his speech, 'See what enormous profit this would produce to the English railways!' You cannot make the terminus at Waterford or Dublin, but the passengers by the Irish railways, who arrive at Waterford, or Cork, or Dublin, will become passengers by the English railroads; and I will again quote his expression, 'see the enormous profit this would produce to the English railroads!' Well, if English railroads pay now 12 or 15 per cent. to the proprietors, and if many persons holding shares in English companies are also great holders in Irish speculations, upon what principle is it that, should this plan be attended with enormous profit, why, or on what grounds, do you ask us to advance money for the purpose of carrying out the plan? Take, then, the Birmingham, or the Great Western, or any other great line of railway, and suppose it to pay 10 per cent.; and suppose that the establishment of railways in Ireland, on

a plan such as that which has been proposed, would produce 'enormous profit' to English railway companies—would it not be manifestly unjust to impede the operations of the money-market, or add to the taxation of this country, in order that that class of Irish shareholders might obtain money at  $3\frac{1}{2}$  per cent.? Suppose the obligation to complete an Irish line obliged those engaged in it to borrow money at 6 per cent., would it be just to add, as I have already stated, to the taxation of the country, by advancing to those parties money at  $3\frac{1}{2}$  per cent., and thus giving a bonus of  $2\frac{1}{2}$  upon every £100 for which they had rendered themselves liable? Sir, I will not pledge the public credit for any such purpose. Why, it would be a direct bonus of £25,000 interest on each million sterling. If, therefore, the shareholder has to pay 6 per cent. interest for money, and wishes to get money at  $3\frac{1}{2}$  per cent., I do not think that he has any claim upon the public credit to enable him to obtain money on those terms. For my part, I think that if, as we have been told, it is probable that this enterprise in Irish railways is calculated to be attended with enormous profit to the English companies, they ought to be the parties to advance the money. If the account which we have heard of the effects which the success of Irish railways would have upon English railways be true, then there is an excellent opportunity for the holders of shares in English railroads, and my right honourable friend (turning to Mr. Hudson\*) at the head of them, to come forward liberally to encourage their construction. But, after all, if this measure really were calculated—as I believe the noble lord sincerely thinks it is—to be a great instrument for producing future good to Ireland, I am not prepared to say that even these financial difficulties would interpose sufficient obstacles; but it is because I doubt whether or no, if

\* Mr. Hudson was at this time Lord Mayor of York; and, as such, entitled to be designated "Right Honourable."

that amount of money, or even one-half of that amount, could not be expended in Ireland with a greater prospect of advantage in other undertakings, and because I doubt the policy of the proposal, combined with the financial difficulties to which I have adverted, that I feel it necessary to express my dissent. The honourable member for Shrewsbury, last night, in adverting to the proofs of the very great poverty and inferiority of Ireland, as compared with England and Scotland, alleged, as a decisive proof of that poverty and inferiority, the strange contrast which was presented in the amount of currency in Scotland as compared with the population, and the amount of currency in Ireland as compared with the population; but I think, that to judge of the amount of currency by its comparison with the population, is a most fallacious test of prosperity between the two countries. Why, it is the pride, and has been the boast of Scotland, that for several years her notes have not much increased; and although I believe no country on the earth has advanced with equal rapidity in that time towards prosperity, yet it will be found that, if compared with the number of notes issued a few years ago in Scotland, no increase has taken place in the present issue at all corresponding with her advancing prosperity. Therefore, when the honourable member says, that the fact of £1. or £1. 10s. per head being the proportion of the circulating medium in Ireland to each, whilst the proportion in Scotland was £16, I cannot, for that cause, look upon that as a test of the poverty or inferiority of Ireland. [Mr. Disraeli intimated, without rising, that the right honourable baronet had mistaken his calculation.] Well, then, I shall advert to that which I have stated I looked upon as part of the honourable gentleman's speech, which involves the main consideration in relation to the subject before us. The honourable gentleman (Mr. Disraeli) says, and, I admit, with truth, that, looking to abstract



doctrines, it would be better to leave such speculations to commercial enterprise, without any interference on the part of the state. That is abstractedly true, and, in the case of England, he thinks it is practically applicable ; for the honourable member says, that in England, the prospect of commercial gain always regulates the commercial speculation, and adds—‘ Suppose a man in this country is about to construct a railroad, all he has got to do is to calculate the cost and probable profits of the undertaking. He knows the cost of land, of timber, of iron. He calculates what will be the number of men employed, and, by these purely commercial considerations, he decides that he will embark in a certain enterprise.’

“ The doctrine that such speculations should be left to commercial enterprise, is, therefore, not only abstractedly true, but practicably applicable to England. But the honourable member says, that such is not the case in Ireland—that in Ireland political considerations ought to overpower those doctrines, however true in the abstract ; that the state has misgoverned Ireland, and it, therefore, ought now to interfere to assist this plan. Now, that is an argument which I am about to contest ; and I must say, that I do not think it would be for the advantage of Ireland if political considerations should overpower all the principles which ought to be adhered to in other countries ; and, if I am to judge from the arguments and statements which I have heard in the course of this debate, no cause has been shown why Ireland should be exempted from that principle. I listened to the speakers with attention ; and those who supported this measure convinced me, if their assumptions be correct, that the ordinary considerations of commerce ought to tempt the influx of capital to Ireland. It is the duty of Irishmen to encourage the development of their own resources by such speculations. The noble lord (Lord George

Bentinck) says, that when those railroads are completed, there will be 1,500 miles of Irish railway lines; and if that be so, I say, see what a bonus it will offer to Irish landlords. The noble lord says, that all the land—every square mile adjoining the railway lines—will be improved by them to such an extent, that every acre would have ten shillings added to its rental per annum. Thus the landholders would have added to their income no less a sum than £23,000,000 sterling by this measure. Then, if it would produce such an advantage to the Irish landlords, why do not the Irish landlords promote the construction of railways? Have we not a right to ask that question? We are willing to advance all the sums which may be necessary in order to remove the distress which prevails, and to improve the condition of the Irish labourers; and then, I ask, have we not a right to ask Irish landlords who have property in the vicinity of these projected lines, to advance money to aid in their construction? Take another example: take the case of the Claddagh fishermen in Galway; they are now, according to the statement of the noble member for Stamford, during this debate, enabled to go out with their boats, and catch as many herrings in one night as would bring £4,000, even at the lowest rate; but they are unable, in consequence of having no railway communication, to dispose of those herrings in Dublin, and in various inland towns, and they are obliged to stand idle for three or four nights, frequently, for want of such communication; thus losing £4,000 per night; whilst, if the railways were established, they could make £4,000 every night, and lose no time. If they had railways, they would send their fish by them; and, I ask, is not that a commercial consideration? ‘Oh, there’s no money,’ says the right honourable member for Sunderland. I answer, there is money where he raised the ten millions. I repeat it, there is money. If then, this speculation promises to be so



profitable, tell me what is the reason that British capital has not been invested in it? The honourable member for Shrewsbury says, that in Ireland political considerations ought to overwhelm others—that there would be a great difficulty in obtaining the assent of the landed interest, in consequence of their complicated interests and confused tenures, and thus the difficulty in obtaining the land would be much greater than that which was experienced by English railway companies. Then, I say, simplify the mode of obtaining possession. The noble lord has shown that it would be better for the Irish landlord even to give the land to the railway companies; and I say, if difficulties arise, take measures at once to facilitate the purchase of land on fair terms from the landholders. Nothing can be more easy. You have done it in the case of the Shannon navigation, where you did not let the parties demand an arbitrary sum, but left the decision to the commissioners of the Shannon navigation; and I believe their awards have been so just, that although so many complicated interests were concerned, I have been told there was not a single appeal against their decisions. I know the difficulties with which Irish landlords have to contend, as compared with English landlords, but I would urge on them to consider whether their own advantage would not be concerned in giving all possible facilities in the way of the purchase of land to Irish railway companies; not without a fair and just price; but let Irish landlords agree to the appointment of a commission to make awards in cases of obtaining land by railway companies, as, I believe, they do in France and Belgium. Let them express their desire in all cases to abide by a fair award, and that will limit the difficulties which now exist. If I thought this proposal would be an advantage to Ireland, I should not be deterred by its financial difficulties—great as I believe them to be—from giving it my adhesion. But looking to the permanent

interests of Ireland, I do most seriously doubt whether, if you overlay the application of individual enterprise and capital, to the extent which the noble lord proposes, you will confer a lasting advantage on the people of that country. I am urging my objection to government assistance to the extent which the noble lord proposes. I admit there have been instances of interference by government, and of encouragement given to such undertakings. When I was first lord of the treasury, last year, I gave, in one instance, such encouragement to a railroad, but I did so on the same principle that I should have acted if the demand was made for any other commercial undertaking. And I am not at all prepared to say, that, considering the dreadful calamity which now afflicts Ireland, you should not, on certain conditions, and with a perfect security as to the repayment, give some encouragement to railroads in Ireland; but what I object to is the extent of the encouragement which the noble lord proposes, and which, if once acceded to, you must grant in every case that a railway bill is proposed for that country. I know you have the security that no railway can apply for those advances, except a certain sum has been previously paid by the shareholders; but if these shareholders refuse to contribute, you have no other option than to take possession of the railroad, and to finish it at the public expense; for in case of absolute failure, you have no remedy against the shareholders. Your only remedy will be—I will not say by the sale of the old rails—but by the disposal of the concern itself. I am sure the noble lord will admit that my estimate of the cost of relief, this year, to the destitute, is not exaggerated when I take it at £7,000,000. Now, admitting that the numbers to be employed under the noble lord's proposal are as many as he supposes—supposing that those employed on railways will all be Irishmen, and yet I greatly doubt whether these sums spent in the construction

of railways will greatly diminish the expenditure absolutely necessary for the relief of the poor. I hold in my hand a map of the railways completed in Ireland, those in the course of execution, and those for which bills have passed; and I certainly find—though I am willing to admit that the able-bodied labourers of Connaught will find their way to employment on the eastern coast—that the observation of the right honourable the Chancellor of the Exchequer is correct, that generally the railroads run towards the eastern coast. I only find two comparatively small lines—one from Sligo to the Shannon, estimated at a cost of £100,000, and that from Limerick to Killala, estimated at £300,000—which run towards the west coast of Ireland; so that for the counties of Donegal, Roscommon, Leitrim, Sligo (except for the small line to which I have alluded) Mayo, Galway, Clare (with the exception of the line from Limerick to Ennis), and a great part of the county of Limerick, no provision will be made for the employment of the destitute through means of the formation of railways. In the returns moved for by the honourable member for Renfrewshire, it appeared that those generally employed on railways resided in the immediate neighbourhood of the lines. If that be so, what prospect have you that men in Connaught will be found seeking employment on the lines on the eastern coast? Who is to provide for their families? They will make remittances, you will say. Perhaps they will. But still, the demand on the government for the emergency of the present year, and the provision for the future subsistence of the people, will be very heavy, even if we take for granted that all the employment on which the noble lord reckons will be guaranteed to the people. I have for a long period entertained sincere doubts whether we did not carry government interference much too far, as to commercial enterprises in Ireland. The right honourable gentleman, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, referred to

some cases of government-loans for such a purpose. I wish the house was aware of the full history of the loans for inland communication in Ireland. The right honourable gentleman showed how inland navigation had been promoted and encouraged by government. I will present to the House a contrast between enterprises encouraged and fostered by government—and enterprises, under every difficulty and discouragement, of which the life and soul consisted in the hope of individual gain. By the Irish parliament inland navigation was greatly fostered and encouraged. What were the grounds on which public aid was granted? Exactly the same as those on which you are called on to give enormous sums in public aid of railways. By the 25th Geo. III., a corporation was formed for promoting and carrying on inland navigation. With what hope? The magnificent one of joining the Irish Channel to the Atlantic, by a canal directly across Ireland. The most confident prophecies were made as to the returns which such a communication would yield; and I am satisfied these would have been fulfilled if you had left the undertaking to individual enterprise, and had not meddled with its concerns. The act said, ‘These works being for the public benefit, by encouraging trade and employing the poor, it is reasonable they should be carried on at the charge of the kingdom.’ In 1787, the affairs of the corporation had gone on so badly, that it was dissolved. But even with that warning, you would not trust to the individual energies of the country. Directors of inland navigation were appointed, and, seeing that the public money was to be disposed of, two canals nearly parallel were determined on—the Royal Canal and the Grand Canal! I had the misfortune to have one of these canals brought under my notice. The original estimate for it was £190,000,—£60,000 of the public money, and £130,000 subscriptions. In 1811, there was an inquiry into the affairs of the company, which had got into a state of confusion,



notwithstanding the interest which the directors of inland navigation had in its prosperity; and what was the result? It was found that £186,000 of public money had then been granted; that the income of the canal was £15,000; that the maintenance of works cost £11,000; and the members of the company called on me, and told me that there was £4,000 (the difference between £11,000 and £15,000), to pay the debt of £49,000 to the government. When we came to the inquiry, it was found that this company, which had been so much encouraged by government, had made dividends amongst the proprietors, not only when there was no real profit, but when they were obliged to pay a great part of the interest of the government-loan, and of the permanent expenses, by new loans. It is, over again, the story of the Caledonian Canal. The Royal Canal Company told me, 'Unless you grant £150,000 more—£186,000 of public money being expended when the original estimate was £190,000—we must give up the undertaking;' and parliament, at my instance, did grant that additional sum. The company was dissolved, and I hope its affairs are better managed now than when assisted by government. That was the result of government interference as to canal communication. Let me contrast this with what was done without government interference. This account appears in an admirable work on railways in Ireland, by Mr. Drummond, Mr. Liddel, and some others; and although I dissent from many of the conclusions there drawn, it is quite marvellous how they anticipate the improvements since made, and foresee events which it was hardly possible to foresee. [The right honourable gentleman then read an extract from Mr. Drummond's report on railways in Ireland, giving an account of the success of Mr. Bianconi's cars in the south and west of Ireland. It began by stating, that the enterprise and talent of an individual had, within the last ten years, supplied the



entire of the south, and a great part of the west of Ireland, with the means of internal communication.] Had this individual the advantage of enormous capital? His name was Bianconi. He was a native of Milan. He was unacquainted with the language spoken in the country, and had little more capital to commence with than the cost of the first cars he established. 'Fortune,' said this report, 'or, rather, the due reward of industry and integrity, favoured this person, and he soon spread his system of communication through Munster and the counties of Sligo and Leitrim, having established ninety-four cars, traversing 3,000 miles.' These results were the more striking, as having been accomplished in the face of violence and outrage. Suppose we had said to Mr. Bianconi when he first commenced, 'there are political considerations which do away with commercial enterprise: the country is disturbed: there are party processions, religious animosities; you must not trust, therefore, to your industry and enterprise; the government will undertake such communications.' I fear, if we had held this language, car communication would now be, in the south of Ireland, in as flourishing a state as canal navigation. The report went on to say, that he established this system in the county of Tipperary, where neither life nor property was safe, and he soon found that his confidence was well-founded, and that he was exempt from all intimidation, and became actually popular. That was the difference between the exertion of individual enterprise, and that backed by the state. Let me entreat of you Irish proprietors to imitate this example, and believe me—if you feel convinced that railroads will add to the value of your property £23,000,000, according to the sanguine estimate of the noble lord, and therefore determine to deal liberally with the companies, and to simplify the cumbrous processes of the law—if, disregarding 'party processions and religious animosities,' and the feeling that

political considerations overpower private enterprise you meet with a deep interest in the welfare of your common country ;—if you promote that welfare, and, at the same time, engage in those useful occupations which add to the enjoyment of your own lives and the benefit of your own property ;—if you will trust to the influence of individual enterprise, and practise that integrity and skill in those public undertakings which you are sure to exhibit in every profession and calling to which you are called ;—if you will imitate the example set you by a foreigner unacquainted with the language of the country ;—if, forgetful of the malignant influence of party and religious differences, you meet together under a sense of the overpowering calamity from which your country is suffering, and determine to direct all your energies to the mitigation of that calamity, and to the improvement of the social condition of the millions dependent on your exertions for their future well-being ;—then, I say, you will do more to promote the interests of your native land than if, resigning yourselves to sloth, and idleness, and despair, you place your whole confidence in government grants and government patronage.”

This telling and convincing speech was “received with cheers, which lasted several minutes.” It completely disposed of the question as far as waverers—of whom there were many in the House—were concerned, and left the government certain of a majority. Lord G. Bentinck did not attempt any reply to the arguments of the right honourable baronet, but endeavoured to influence the House by a bit of sarcasm against the reference to Mr. Bianconi and his ears, at the conclusion of the speech.

“Mr. Bianconi and his ears seemed to be the standing stock in trade of the right honourable gentleman. It would be in the recollection of every gentleman in that House, that, in the year 1839, the government of Lord Melbourne proposed a

scheme for aiding and assisting the carrying out of railways in Ireland, and that then the right honourable gentleman made a speech word for word with that listened to within the last half hour. 'Leave private enterprise,' said the right honourable gentleman, 'to take its course;' but seven years had elapsed, and what had been the result? Why, while in this country they had 2,600 miles of railway, while in Belgium there were 375 miles of railway completed, in Austria and Belgium 3,000 miles, and in the United States 3,200 miles; in Ireland, where enterprise had been left unaided by government, they had only 123 miles of railroad."

After some further observations, many of which were irrelevant, Lord G. Bentinck concluded with an appeal on the faith of his personal responsibility, which excited some amusement in the House, and in the country.

"I will be responsible," he said, "for carrying this measure out, and for the employment of the people; I will be responsible for the regeneration of Ireland; and if it fail, why, then I shall be liable to impeachment, and I shall challenge the House to put that process in force against me. I say not this in any trifling spirit, or in any idle bravado. There are ready hands and glad hearts in this House, I doubt not, to put it in force. There is a party in this House to whom I have shown no quarter, and it is meet and just that they should show no quarter to me. As I have given no quarter, I will take no quarter; and I now offer myself, with the assistance of the gentleman I have before named, to carry out this measure at the hazard of impeachment, without costing the country a single shilling; and I will answer for its success. It is a measure which offends against no old party recollections; it is a measure which wars not against any religious prejudice; it is a measure which confiscates no property; it is a measure which makes no outrage upon constitutional law; it is a measure which, whilst it clothes the

naked and fills the hungry with good things, would not send the rich empty away. And I now ask the government, for the last time; I appeal to the government; I implore them to accept it at my hands. I say to them, grant to Ireland, grant to me, my fervent, my honest, my only prayer, and I, for one, care not if this be the last time that I address this, or any other mortal assembly."

It was now more than three o'clock in the morning; and Lord John Russell, who had hitherto taken no part in the debate, contented himself with addressing a very few sentences to the House. He opened by stating, that he generally concurred in Sir Robert Peel's view of our financial position at the present moment, which rendered any question of assistance to Ireland extremely serious. He then proceeded to express his own disapproval of the proposed measure, and, apart from considerations of its abstract advantages, stated, that no government could consent to have the finances of the country removed from their control in the manner, and to the extent, proposed by its noble mover.

On a division, this notable project was thrown out by a majority of 332 against 118.

The question of the extension of the great principle of the English Poor-Law to Ireland—for such was, in point of fact, the measure which the government found itself compelled to introduce—gave rise to many long discussions, both in and out of parliament. The principle that the able-bodied pauper has a *right* to relief, either in or out of the workhouse, is a peculiarly dangerous one among any people, and its too lax interpretation had gradually been lowering the standard of morality among the English peasantry, until the "New Poor-Law," as it was called, put a stop to the evil. England was fast rushing into a bottomless gulf of pauperism, when that celebrated measure was introduced. Those who remembered the extent of the mischief, and the cost at which it had been



arrested, were alarmed at the proposal to introduce, for the first time, into a country like Ireland, a measure which should give the idlest peasant a right to demand and receive his food from the public. Yet it was obviously necessary, if our civilization and our Christianity were not to be belied by the spectacle of thousands of people dying of starvation by the road-side, and in the wretched mud-cabins of Ireland, that a poor-law of some real and practical kind should be established. The difficulty was to frame a measure which should give relief in the dire emergency in which Ireland was placed, and which should neither entirely ruin the owners of the soil, nor sap the very foundation of all social well-being, the independent spirit of the people. With this difficulty the government of Lord John Russell had to grapple. The House of Commons having signally expressed its approval of the Irish policy of the ministry, by the rejection of Lord George Bentinck's railway project, the premier lost no time in introducing his promised measures—the one, to preserve the people from extermination, by making the owners and occupiers of land liable to an amount of poor-rate sufficient to feed the awful numbers that were destitute; and the other, to aid the landlords to bear the new and heavy burden, imposed upon them by policy and justice, no less than by necessity. The one measure was called the Irish Poor Relief bill; the other was a bill for making advances from the public treasury, to enable impoverished, or other landlords, to drain and cultivate their estates.

The Irish poor-law bill was stoutly opposed by a large party in England, who objected to it as not being based on the true principles of political economy; and was still more vehemently opposed by the Irish landlords. Lord Radnor, in entering his protest in the journals of the House of Lords, against the previous measure of the government for the temporary relief of the Irish people, stated at full length the

reasons which urged the political philosophers of his school to deny the *right* of a people, either to temporary or permanent relief from the public charity ; and his protest, as expressing the views of a considerable party, is here reproduced. His lordship protested—

“1. Because this bill is based on the principle, that it is the duty of a government to provide food for the people ; and I consider this principle false in theory, and as leading to injustice and disastrous consequences if attempted in practice. It is false in theory, as being, in the natural state of things, utterly impracticable ; the government having no store of food wherewith to supply the people, or funds for providing the same. In practice, it leads to injustice and disastrous consequences, because such funds can be obtained only by taxation ; and if the taxes are levied (as they ought and profess to be) equally on all, the whole will be taxed, to supply the wants of a part : the consequence of which must be, that some persons on the verge of destitution will be thus reduced to the same state as those whom they are taxed to relieve, and that those who, by prudence and industry, have raised themselves out of the reach of want, will be taxed for the relief of the improvident and idle.

“2. Because it is dangerous for a government to take any step which is calculated to instil into the minds of the people the belief, that they need not rely on their own exertions for their well-being, and a hope that, if they omit to take proper care of themselves, it will relieve their necessities, and gratuitously support them.

“3. Because the Irish people are of a temperament peculiarly likely to be misled.

“4. Because experience, both in Ireland and in England, under the old administration of the poor-laws, proves that the attempt to provide gratuitously for the needy is, in its result, dangerous to property, and to the independence and well-

being of the people, and injurious to none more than to those very persons whose benefit is thereby sought ; by superseding the necessity, and thus repressing the energy, of their own exertions to keep themselves ; by diverting them from those resources which the pressure of want would disclose ; and, above all, by teaching them to rely on external aid, which, as it cannot be efficient in extent, or permanent in duration, will finally leave them disappointed and discontented, and more destitute and helpless than before.

“5. Because I fear that, if this measure be adopted, it will necessarily lead to other measures of a similar nature ; and, that though some present relief may be given to existing misery and destitution, it will lead hereafter to an alarming increase of the evils thus temporarily mitigated ; and that, therefore, though feelings of the most praiseworthy and benevolent character prompt its adoption, prudence, reason, and true wisdom, would reject it.

“6. Because charity is a proper motive for the private conduct of individuals, but justice the paramount duty of a government ; and because charity to some, on the part of the latter, works out present injustice to others, and ultimately evil to all.”

The Irish landlords did not go the length of Lord Radnor. They made no attack upon the principle of a poor-law granting relief to the able-bodied as well as to the infirm ; but confined themselves to declamation against the measure, as one that would create greater evils than it would cure. At a meeting of Irish landlords and others interested in the subject, held in Dublin at the commencement of February, a string of resolutions was passed, asserting the general principle, that relief to the destitute should be given in such a manner as to secure the landlord, who discharged his duty, from being burdened with the pauperism of those proprietors who neglected it. They declared that no *right*

of relief could be safely conferred, without being accompanied by a law of settlement, which in itself was a most difficult question, inasmuch as one effect of a law of settlement would be to afford a direct bonus to the immediate and wholesale clearance of estates; and under the actual circumstances of Ireland, it was peculiarly unfitted for the operation of such a law. The resolutions further declared, that the workhouse test, involving a deprivation of liberty, should be strictly enforced, unless in extreme cases; that the area of taxation should be limited as much as possible; and that all available productive property, including government funds and all direct income out of land, should bear a portion of the tax for relief, as well as the owners and occupiers of the land. The resolutions made the most decided objection to the proposed system of relief to the able-bodied, which, in its operation, would, they alleged, become virtually a *right*; and also to the arrangement for charging the entire out-door relief upon the union at large, instead of the electoral division, thus rendering it the interest of the town rate-payers and guardians to give out-door relief in all cases, in order to throw the burden on the rural divisions. A memorial to government, signed by 64 Irish peers, and 43 Irish members, gave expression to these and similar objections.

Many debates took place upon the bill in its various stages; but on its going into committee on the 12th of March, Lord John Russell took the opportunity to defend both the bill and the government:—

His lordship said, “ he would first refer to what the government had refused to do. They had declined to undertake the feeding of the people of Ireland by the importation of grain, which would have interfered with the trade of the country. Government had also steadily refused to undertake the cultivation of the soil in that



country. In addition to this, it had also refused to become responsible for a government system of emigration. With reference to the amount spent on relief-works in the month of February, 1847, it was £944,141. The number of persons employed during the week ending the 6th of February, was 615,055; the week ending the 13th of February, 655,715; ending the 20th February, 668,749; the 27th February, 708,228. Had it not been for an enlarged outlay on the part of the government, many persons would have perished. Government had, however, never been insensible to the evils attendant on the relief-works. It had been determined, from various considerations, to reduce as much as possible—as soon as the ploughing and sowing season approached—the number of persons employed on the public works. The treasury had, in consequence of this determination, directed notice to be given to the Board of Works, that from Saturday the 20th of March, the number employed should be reduced by 20 per cent., and that reductions should thereafter continue to be made until the new system should come into operation. Government trusted to a judicious reduction of this sort of employment, hoping it would enable the farmers to procure sufficient labourers to till the soil. With reference to the memorial, signed by 64 Irish peers, and 43 Irish members, he must state, that he could not agree to the resolutions, as they precluded the House from entertaining the question of out-door relief. The experience of last year was urged against the experiment, but he contended, that this was not a fair test of the system government were about to propose. It did not follow that the relief to be given in the workhouse to the able-bodied should be gratuitous relief. The Poor-Law Commissioners and the Board of Guardians would have power to make regulations for work, as they had in Eng-

land. If the destitute poor of Ireland were not to be provided for, when necessary, out of the workhouse, he should be glad to know what other plan for their relief could be proposed by those who objected to his plan? It had been asserted, that private charity was so extensive in Ireland, that it was not likely any one would be permitted to starve. He admitted the extent of private charity, but then it was the charity of the poor to the very poor. There was no compulsion to contribute to the relief of destitution on those in better circumstances. The absentee proprietor who did not see the distress on his estates, could not be compelled to mitigate it. But the able-bodied in seasons of distress must have some means of relief; they could not always expect to fall back on the imperial treasury. No way existed of permanently providing for the poor but by a measure like the one before the House. Government proposed to extend to Ireland a system of relief similar to that existing in England. The able-bodied were to have relief, but they were to be received in the workhouse so long as there was room, and the condition of relief must be that they consented to work. The Board of Guardians were to have power to make rates relating to work. There had grown up in Ireland a vast number of cottiers and mendicants, who were of course reduced to great distress recently. Some of the resident gentry had nobly done their duty, but, as a whole, he was sorry to say, they had not acted as they ought to have acted in this crisis. The per centage on property must be raised—the poor must have support—the rates were too small in many places, and in others they could not be levied. This must be remedied, and this would be remedied by his measure, which, he contended, if fairly carried out, would work favourably for Ireland.”

It was upon this occasion that Lord George Bentinck,

in denouncing the policy and conduct of government in Irish affairs, made one of those intemperate and inconsiderate displays, by which the short career of this nobleman, in his position as leader of the protectionist party, was more than once unfavourably distinguished. The incident would be unimportant in itself, save as it affords an example of the extraordinary political excitement of the time; and of the exasperation felt by many of the opponents of the free-trade policy of Sir Robert Peel, and of the ministry which carried out that policy, after he had been ejected from office. Upon the motion of Mr. Smith O'Brien, for a clause providing for a revision and reconstitution of the Irish Poor-Law Unions, so that no Union should contain more than 150,000 acres, Lord George Bentinck entered into a statistical detail, to show that the government, by building cheap workhouses, and multiplying their number to the extent of 400, would not only have brought each pauper within  $3\frac{1}{2}$  miles of some workhouse, and each guardian within the same distance, and thereby saved many lives, but that it would also have saved £4,319,733 in the course of the year. "Not only had the money of the country been uselessly lavished by the government, but innumerable lives had been sacrificed. Yes," said the noble lord with great vehemence, "we cannot learn from the government how many hundreds of thousands have perished. It is the only subject of secrecy with the Irish government. We can learn the number of bushels of potatoes and the quarters of wheat and of oats that have been thrown on the coast of Ireland, but there is one point on which alone the Irish government are totally ignorant, totally careless, or else are determined to keep this country in darkness, and that is the mortality that has occurred during their mal-administration of Irish affairs. Yes, they shrink from telling us. They are ashamed to tell us. They know that the people have died by thousands; and I dare

them to ask,—I dare them to inquire what the numbers of the dead have been,—dead, through their mismanagement ; dead, chiefly through their principles of free trade. Yes, free trade with the lives of the Irish people, leaving the people to take care of themselves, when Providence has kept the food from the face of the earth—leaving the people, in a country where there are neither mills, nor stores, nor granaries, to perish. ('No, no!' from Mr. Labouchere.) Ay, the right honourable gentleman may cry 'No, no!' Why does he not give us information, then? If he does not shrink from telling us the truth, why does he not give us the information which he now conceals from us, and then we shall know what the effects of his administration have been? Never before was there an instance of a Christian government allowing so many people to perish, without interfering. Yes, you groan; but you will hear this. The time will come when we shall know what the amount of mortality has been; and though you may groan, and try to keep truth down, it shall be known, and will be known, and the time will come when the public and the world will be able to estimate at its proper value your management of the affairs of Ireland."

Mr. Labouchere rose at this attack, and observed that he felt called upon to deny that the government had been indifferent to the sufferings of the people of Ireland, or that they had been anxious to conceal the extent of the mortality in that country from the House or the public; and this contradiction he gave to the noble lord, in terms as explicit, direct, and complete, as his respect for the House would permit him to do.

This dignified reply to the preposterous allegations of the opposition leader was received with loud and reiterated applause. The great principle of the bill—that of allowing outdoor relief to the able-bodied poor—was formally brought to a



division in committee on the 19th of March, when Mr. Shaw moved the omission of the clause. The division showed a majority of 242 against 36, in favour of the principle. After this all further opposition in the Lower House was useless. On the 29th of March, Mr. Gregory moved the insertion of a clause, to the effect, that no person occupying more than a quarter of an acre of land should be considered a destitute person under the provisions of the bill, or be entitled to any relief until he had parted with all title or interest in such land. This clause, rendered necessary by the mendicant habits and gross demoralization of the peasantry generally, and of which the application for employment on the relief works afforded thousands of instances, was, after some discussion, agreed to, by a majority of 117 to 7. Two clauses were then proposed by Lord George Bentinck, the intention of which was to protect the landlords, as far as practicable, from the burden of the poor-rates, which the law has properly sought to throw upon them, as the persons primarily responsible for the employment and lives of the people. The first clause went to prohibit the rate-paying tenant from deducting from his lessor any rate which he might have paid. Lord George Bentinck thought it would be for the benefit of all parties to throw the responsibility created by the poor-law as much as possible upon the rate-payer, who would have the greatest interest in watching and keeping down the rate, and who would, in due time, make a bargain with his landlord for a deduction from his rent, in proportion to the rent paid by him. The object of the second clause was twofold: first, to reduce the number of middle rate-payers, from whom it was very difficult to obtain the rates; and secondly, by reducing their number, to diminish the inducement to sub-let farms in small lots. The clauses were opposed by Sir George Grey, on the part of the government, and, after a long discussion, they were rejected by 79 against 76 votes. Whilst yet this measure was in

progress through the Commons, Lord Monteagle sought by anticipation to pledge the Upper House against its adopting it. His motion was for a committee of inquiry into the reports made to their lordships by the commissioners upon this subject, with a view of condemning their recommendations. He had no intention of examining witnesses, although he had no objection to do so; he considered that their lordships were already in possession of ample information on the subject; and all he sought for from them now was, a solemn declaration of opinion. He contended, that as the Irish poor-law was to be a permanent measure, the present state of the country should not be allowed to influence their lordships in its consideration, and it ought to be judged on its abstract merits and likelihood of practical benefit, apart from the pressure of the present exigency. The motion was approved by Earl Grey, the Earl of Devon, and others; and supported by Lord Brougham, Earl Fitzwilliam, and the Archbishop of Dublin—all more or less the philosophical opponents of any and every form of poor-law. Upon a division, the motion was rejected by a majority of 39 against 12.

The bill was read a third time in the Commons, on the 16th of April; and, on the 29th, the Marquis of Lansdowne moved the second reading in the House of Lords, in an able speech of considerable length, in the course of which he denied what had been industriously charged against it in various quarters, that it was a measure establishing a general, permanent, and indiscriminate right to out-door relief in Ireland, and thereby involving the confiscation of property in that country. The Earl of Clancarty moved an amendment, to read the bill that day six months, in which, after receiving the support of Lord Brougham, the Archbishop of Dublin, and Lord Stanley, he did not persevere and the bill was read, and its principles virtually adopted. Still, however, the zeal of the opponents of the measure was not extinguished.

In committee, on the 6th of May, Lord Monteagle moved an amendment on the first clause, the object of which was to make the measure a temporary one, restricting its operation to one year. A smart discussion ensued, signalized by a declaration from Lord Abinger, who intimated, that if the amendment was rejected, he should propose a proviso, to the effect, "That any person, after the passing of this bill, who entered into matrimony, should have no right to relief." Lord Monteagle's amendment was carried by a majority of 63 to 50. This fatal proviso, however, was afterwards struck out, on the bringing up of the report, by a majority of 54 against 42. Lord Stanley moved the omission of the 10th clause, the purport of which was, that expenses beyond 1s. 3d. in the pound should be charged to the union at large; and, upon a division, the clause was lost. At a subsequent stage, Lord Stanley moved the insertion of a clause similar to that which had been unsuccessfully moved by Lord George Bentinck in the Lower House; but after some discussion he withdrew his motion; and eventually, on the 18th of May, the bill, having suffered various alterations, was read a third time. When the bill was sent back to the Lower House, many of their lordships' amendments were declared by the Speaker to be in breach of the privileges of the Commons: but the objection in regard to some of them was waved, and after some mutual concessions this important measure became the law of the land on the 8th of June.

We shall have occasion again to advert to this subject, as the whole principle of the act underwent new and still fiercer discussions, when the inability of several of the Irish poor-law unions to pay the heavy debts levied upon them was made manifest to the government and the nation; and when it became apparent that, a poor-law—wholesome as its operation might be in some countries more favourably situated than Ireland—was scarcely applicable to a country purely

agricultural, possessing neither a solvent proprietary, a stable middle-class, nor a self-reliant peasantry.

The Landed Property Advances bill experienced almost as many vicissitudes, if not so steady an opposition, as the Poor Relief bill. On the 8th of March, on the motion for going into committee, Mr. Roebuck moved, as an amendment, "That any plans of relief for the distress of the Irish poor, by means of loans to the owners of property in Ireland, would be unjust and impolitic, unless accompanied by a system of taxation which would subject such property to the burdens already imposed upon all property throughout Great Britain." The honourable and learned gentleman was very severe upon the Irish landlords. For them, as a body, he entertained no sympathy. He contended that the government was coerced into the adoption of the measure, by noblemen of influence having a direct interest in landed property in Ireland. Upon this occasion, Sir Robert Peel made a very few observations. After commenting upon the discursive character of Mr. Roebuck's discourse, he addressed himself, with his customary force and precision, to the practical points at issue. He thought—

"That neither was the present a fitting occasion to discuss the question whether or not Ireland should be called upon to bear her contribution to the financial and local government; nor was the amendment of the honourable and learned gentleman the best mode by which to come to a satisfactory conclusion upon that question. The question was one of very great importance. The object of the bill was to enable certain owners of property in Ireland to avail themselves of the power which the government possessed, and to take from the government money by way of loan. He apprehended there were not two opinions as to the present condition of Ireland. They were told that 700,000 men were employed upon public works in that country. The legislature had already given its assent to



measures for affording relief by the gratuitous distribution of food ; and he thought few persons could doubt that it would now be advisable to advance loans, to be repaid, both principal and interest, for the purpose of enabling the landed proprietors to improve their properties, by employing the population in the cultivation of the soil, and in increasing its produce. But the honourable and learned member for Bath asked the House, before it assented to such a course of proceeding, to resolve that any plans of relief for the distress of the Irish poor, by means of loans to the owners of property in Ireland, would be unjust and impolitic, unless accompanied by a system of taxation which would subject such property to the burdens already imposed upon all property throughout Great Britain ! How would it be possible practically to act upon such a resolution ? Suppose twenty proprietors applied to borrow £10,000 each, to improve their properties by the employment of the labour of the population, entering into engagements to repay the amount of those loans with interest ; what were to be the regulations under which the advance was to be made ? Were they to pay the income tax ? or, rather, was the income tax to be applicable not to proprietors generally, but only to those owners of property who should apply for loans to the government ? That was the regulation propounded by the honourable and learned member ; if not, what was the meaning of his resolution ? Would it be just, if ten individuals borrowed money from the government for the purpose of improving their property, either that they should be individually liable to pay the income-tax, or that the whole of Ireland should be called upon to do so ?” [Mr. Roebuck : the whole of Ireland.] “Then the honourable and learned member diminished the importance of the question by bringing it forward in its present shape. The question ought to be discussed separately and distinctly. If it were right that the people of Ireland should bear equal

burdens with those of England, the question should be brought under discussion upon great national grounds ; but to say that the application to Ireland of the income-tax should depend upon the advances made to certain proprietors in that country, would be to prejudice and diminish the importance of the whole question. It was a question of too much difficulty to be met by such a general resolution. He was ready to discuss the question, but he must reserve to himself the power of doing so without reference to the advance made by way of loan to certain proprietors. He could not think it would be just to subject the whole of the property of Ireland to the income-tax on that ground. He was not denying that it might be desirable to give full consideration to this question, both with reference to financial and local taxation ; but he must say, that it would prejudice the subject, and diminish the prospect of a satisfactory arrangement, if the resolution as moved were adopted. He was adverse to the declaration of an abstract proposition of this nature ; he was ready to consider the matter when put into a practical form ; but on these grounds, and without contesting the justice of the principle, he must decline to give his support to the resolution before the House."

The result of the debate was a majority of 121 against 26, in favour of the government.

## CHAPTER V.

## IRISH RAILWAYS—THE MONETARY CRISIS.

ALTHOUGH the government, supported by the high authority of Sir Robert Peel, felt itself compelled to resist the gigantic railway project of Lord George Bentinck, there was a general impression in the House, and in the country, that a modified assistance to Irish railways, already in course of construction, would be expedient. The great objections to the projects of Lord George Bentinck were, its interference with the ordinary operations of trade, and the impossibility of organizing any adequate machinery to carry it to a profitable issue. These objections would not apply to a proposal for assisting railways already commenced, and which were necessary to connect such places as Dublin and Cork, or to form the grand arterial lines through the country. Accordingly, on the 26th of April, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced, that the government had taken the matter into consideration; and had resolved to ask the permission of parliament to grant loans to three railways, the works upon which, without such aid, would in all probability be suspended for a time, to the great diminution of employment among the starving people. He did not propose an advance to any railway company which was not in a condition to borrow money by having paid up 50 per cent. of its capital. The first line he proposed to assist was that of the Great South-Western Company. Its capital was £2,600,000, and it had paid up £1,400,000. It proposed to raise £500,000, to be expended between that time and the ensuing month of December. The company proposed to pay up in five or six instalments, the

same amount, by fresh calls to be made on their subscribers, and to set to work 1,500 men within a fortnight after they had received the loan made to them by the government. The next line was that of the Waterford and Kilkenny Company. Their capital was £250,000, and they had paid up £125,000. They applied for a loan of £83,000, and proposed to meet it with a fresh call on their subscribers to the same amount. The third line was the Dublin and Drogheda line. Their capital was £150,000, and £100,000 of it had been paid up. They applied for a loan of £36,000. After giving an account of the diminution of expense which had already taken place on the relief works, and of the still further diminution which might be expected upon them, the right honourable gentleman moved that exchequer bills to the amount of £620,000 be issued for the purpose of being advanced, in the proportions which he had described, to these three railroads.

In the course of the discussion which ensued upon this motion, unavoidable reference was made to the state of the money-market, which was far from favourable to any large projects, of whatever kind they might be. Money had long been exceedingly scarce; the best mercantile paper was scarcely negotiable, even at enormous discounts; 7 and 8 per cent. being commonly given with readiness where it was imperative to procure cash. Meantime consols had fallen to  $86\frac{1}{2}$ , and exchequer bills were scarcely saleable at par. All this, perhaps, was the natural consequence of two great prevailing causes, which had been in operation, to a greater or less extent, during the two or three preceding years, namely, in the first place, the enormous railway speculations of the years 1845-6, which had diverted capital, that upon a moderate calculation might be set down at £100,000,000 sterling, from the regular operations of commerce; and, secondly, the large purchases of foreign corn, which had, to a



very considerable extent, to be paid for in cash. Without reflecting on the latter point, no one can look back upon the reckless gambling which was carried on in railway shares in the period referred to,—in the course of which whole fortunes were lost, and the ordinary business-transactions of commercial firms neglected or entirely suspended ; in which, in short, there was a wholesale sacrifice, both of capital, of time, of mercantile relations, and in too many instances of personal character,—without acknowledging that sooner or later a day of retribution, suffering, and privation must visit the country. A year of scarcity, which pervaded the whole of Europe, was a dispensation of Providence which brought on the crisis sooner, and in a sharper form, than might otherwise have been the case ; but the disturbed state of commerce, and the consequent distress, could only be looked upon as the natural consequence and the just retribution of our own acts.

Nevertheless, there was a very large portion of the community who took a very different view of the matter ; and, overlooking the obvious truth, that great losses must be followed by inconvenience, if not penury, contended that the commercial pressure was solely attributable to the restrictions imposed upon the currency by those celebrated measures of Sir Robert Peel—the Bullion act of 1819, and the Bank Restriction act of 1844. But for these laws, it was argued, that credit would have gone on as usual, and supplied the place of actual capital, during periods when it was no longer forthcoming ; that country bankers, at the actual moment in question, would have freely “accommodated” their provincial customers—now penitently returned to their accustomed occupations—with paper in exchange for paper ; whilst the Bank of England would have as freely “accommodated” the country banks with all the means at its disposal,—thus staking the national credit upon the solvency of numberless

minor firms and individuals, whose more recent operations had certainly been far from successful, and whose actual position was avowedly precarious. But this is not the place to discuss the currency question in all its complicated bearings. It will be sufficient to call attention to the main points of contention which it presents, and to state that they were never more severely tried, or more ardently disputed, than during the distressing panic of 1847.

Not having hitherto made any reference to the financial affairs of this critical period, it may be proper, before referring to the discussions which took place upon them, to mention a few facts which practically bear upon the subject. It is one of the circumstances which, under the modern system of finance, inevitably tends to aggravate the misfortunes of any period of national distress, or pressure,—that any loan raised to meet the exigency of the time, must be accepted upon terms ruled by a depreciated market, which must entail a permanent loss, in the shape of interest, to the public treasury. Thus the loan of eight millions out of ten millions, granted for the alleviation of the distress in Ireland, was raised by an increase of consolidated stock, after the rate of £89½ for every £100 of stock; and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, in announcing this arrangement to the House of Commons on the 1st of March, stated, that he considered he had effected the loan upon very favourable terms; yet that stock, which cost the lender 89½ per cent., has since been as high as 99 in the market, and would now cost the government 96½ to redeem, if it were proposed to liquidate the claim. This is merely stated, incidentally, as another illustration, fairly correlative to what has preceded, of the danger, inconvenience, and loss, attending all operations in which future resources, whether of individuals or states, are hypothecated for the occasions of the moment.

Meantime, in contrast to the distress which existed in

commercial circles, and the privations, from natural deficiency, experienced by a large number of our destitute brethren in Ireland, and other parts of the kingdom, came the official amounts of the revenue for the year 1846, and particularly of the two last quarters. These were of a character almost to warrant the idea that the privation, though largely and severely felt, was not universally so; and that, if the losses of great commercial firms had been considerable, much of the money had only changed hands, and had afforded (temporarily perhaps) increased means to many individuals in the humbler walks of middle life. The customs and the excise—the truest index of the command of the general community over the necessities and luxuries of life—showed a considerable increase upon the preceding year. The income-tax returns, also, gave an increase of £369,000: the amount for the year being £5,395,000. A further illustration of the great social problem involved in these considerations has more recently appeared in a paper of statistics read by Mr. G. R. Porter, at the meeting of the British Association at Edinburgh, 1850, in which, amongst other matters, he stated, that the year 1846 was remarkable for a considerable increase in the amount of deposits in savings' banks, when, indeed, they were larger than in any preceding year, amounting, in England alone, to more than £26,750,000, and, in the three kingdoms, to £31,700,000. Of this amount, the proportion for England, Wales, and Ireland, was after the rate of 24s. per head; whereas, in 1831, the proportion of deposits per head, for the same portions of the empire, were only 12s. 8d., and in 1848 they declined from 24s. to 20s. 11d. per head. All the above facts would seem to show, that, of the large amounts of capital sent into circulation by the railway projects of 1845-6, a considerable proportion had found its way into new hands, whose circumstances they improved—perhaps only temporarily; and thus, that whilst many large fortunes were

lost in the course of this season of reckless speculation, many small ones were made.

From these speculations, which unavoidably suggest themselves when the financial operations of the government come under review, we now return to the proposition for the grant of £620,000 in exchequer bills, for the promotion of the works of certain railways in Ireland. It gave rise to a smart discussion upon currency matters, in the course of which, the policy of Sir Robert Peel's measures was severely called in question. Lord George Bentinck, again realizing a familiar line in the writings of a great poet, was first to "rush in" to a conflict with the statesman of nearly forty years' experience and observation upon this difficult question. His speech was confident in manner, but superficial in matter and argument. In reviewing the causes which had led to the present monetary crisis, he ridiculed the notion of attributing any part of it to the gigantic railway losses of 1845-6, and attributed the whole mischief to the Corn-law act, which had brought on "that drain of gold, instead of manufactures, to pay for foreign corn, which he and his friends around him had always predicted." He then proceeded to touch upon the currency laws, of which he observed, that "Sir Robert Peel's act might be a good measure for fair weather, but he feared it was little calculated for times like the present; and he called on the Chancellor of the Exchequer, before he should have thousands of bankrupts knocking at his door, to give the Bank some discretion to cause the contracting circulation to expand, and to prevent that ruin to which they appeared at present to be hastening."

The Chancellor of the Exchequer met this appeal by a general reply; and, after some further discussion, the debate was adjourned. When the question came on again for discussion, Sir Robert Peel, challenged by some observations of Mr. Spooner,



member for Birmingham, felt himself obliged to say a few words in defence of his favourite measure of state policy, although he did so with reluctance, considering the occasion inopportune. Upon this subject his observations were as follow:—

“He thought this a most improper occasion for a general debate on the currency—a subject into which the single member for Birmingham had entered. He (Sir R. Peel) did not wish to be provoked into a general discussion, but it was impossible he should observe an entire silence, or acquiescence in his arguments. Mr. Spooner had made a sort of promise, that if he (Sir Robert Peel) would tell him what a pound was at the time of the Conquest, he would tell him what he (Mr. Spooner) or any other banker meant when he issued a note to the public, and said, ‘I promise to pay, on demand, £5.’ His (Sir Robert’s) question was, ‘What is the £5 which you promise to pay?’ That seemed a very simple question: but the honourable gentleman said that he (Sir Robert) was an insidious man, and that he could not trust himself to answer. A pound, at the Conquest, and at various subsequent periods, might have varied as to the quantity of the metal; but at any given period, it had always meant a definite quantity. That quantity was at first regulated by weight; and he apprehended the pound had taken its name from the circumstance of its corresponding to a pound weight of silver. However that might be, and however the quantity might have varied from time to time, ‘a pound’ had always signified a definite quantity. Since the reign of queen Elizabeth we had certainly had both a gold and silver standard; and though the coin might have been occasionally debased, and was constantly worn, still the attention of the law had always been that ‘the pound’ should denote a definite quantity of the precious metals. The honourable gentleman said, that if Mr. Pitt had asked, in 1797, ‘what was a pound?’ this country would have been lowered in the scale

of nations. But if any man had said to Mr. Pitt, in 1797, 'Is it your intention to have an inconvertible paper currency?' he would have said, 'God forbid!' It never was his intention. No man would have deprecated it more than Mr. Pitt. But here was the evil of a first departing from principles. Once involved in it, even Mr. Pitt could not go back. Whether the glories of the war were owing to inconvertible paper or not, this he would say, that the social condition of the country was impaired by it. He would tell his honourable friend who suffered most from it. It was that class who received the wages of labour; for though the wages of labour might nominally remain the same, the command they had over the necessaries of life was very much reduced. But, notwithstanding all the glories of the war, the currency before 1819 was most imperfect. In what respect? Because it was inconvertible. He understood his honourable friend to say that it was unwise, in 1819, to restore the ancient gold standard; as paper was not equal in value to gold, though nominally it professed to be so, and, therefore, when they were arranging the currency, they ought not to have adopted, as the standard, gold at the value of £3. 17s. 10½d. the ounce; but gold at £4. 5s. or £4. 10s. the ounce, or something which might represent the depreciation of paper which had taken place. But, with the exception of pecuniary engagements, it was a matter of utter indifference, provided the promissory note was to be paid in coin, whether they adopted the gold standard of £3. 17s. 10½d., or £4. 2s., or £4. 5s., or anything else. It would be no relief to commerce if the standard was now £4. 5s., instead of £3. 17s. 10½d. Would not the foreigner know the value of the currency, make what reduction they might? For the payment of internal debts, indeed, it might make a difference, but it was a matter of perfect indifference as to the pressure on the Bank in a time of commercial difficulty, provided that there

was the obligation to pay at some time or other in coin, the whole value of the note. Would his honourable friend undertake to revise the arrangement of 1819? because that was the question. If he did not do that, an inconvertible paper currency would offer no remedy. If they would have one-pound notes, indeed, and encourage the export of gold, that might give some relief for a time; but if they maintained an inconvertible paper currency, and were not at the same time prepared to revise all the transactions which not only preceded 1819, but the whole of the transactions which had taken place since 1819, it would not have the slightest effect in diminishing these difficulties. The transactions in the funds since 1819 had taken place in the depreciated currency, and every man who purchased an estate since then paid for it in the same way. Was it possible, then, that the most strenuous opponent of the arrangement of 1819 could now propose to re-adjust the immense transactions which had taken place since 1819? His honourable friend admitted that the act of 1844 was necessary to maintain the act of 1819. It was the complement of the act of 1819; and those who supported the gold standard of £3. 17s. 10½d. were bound to support the act of 1844. He must say that the act of 1844 was completely misunderstood. The main object of that act was to secure the convertibility of paper into gold: that was its principal object; but another object of it certainly was, to have such a currency as should ensure to the holder of paper the full equivalent of its nominal value, and, at the same time, should not restrict the ordinary commercial transactions of this great country. Well, his firm belief was, that the act of 1844 did not impose any such restriction. It was erroneous to suppose that that act contained, in itself, a self-acting principle, and relieved the Bank of England from all responsibility. He totally denied the claim for relief from all responsibility on the part of the Bank of England in

carrying out the act of 1844. The issue department contained, he admitted, a self-acting principle, because the amount of notes issued from that department was governed by law, and the Bank had no discretion. But the Bank had a discretion in the banking department. It was responsible for the general superintendence of the monetary concerns of the country. It was bound, by prudence, caution, and foresight, to prevent ultimate embarrassment and pressure, to prevent an undue increase of circulation, but also to prevent an undue restriction of it; and he understood that the Bank recognized the principle on which the act of 1844 was founded, and acknowledged the obligation to conduct its concerns with some reference to this principle. The Bank had a right to receive from him testimony to its high honour; and he must say, he never could speak of that establishment without bearing testimony to the high honour of those concerned in it; and, with the imperfect knowledge he—not being entrusted with the responsibility of government—possessed, he spoke of it with hesitation. But he felt bound to say, that so far from anything which now occurred impeaching the act of 1844, that both the time of prosperity, and now this present time of adversity, convinced him that the principle of that act was founded on sound policy, and that it ought to be, so far as he was aware, strictly upheld and maintained. He could not help feeling, that a rigid observance of the general principles on which that act was founded would have prevented, at least, the intensity of the evil. Why, this act of 1844 never professed to teach the people of this country—at least, it did not inculcate upon them—the necessity of caution; but he must say, that there had been, on the part of almost all the community, a great disregard of those indications of danger which were perfectly legible since the month of August, 1846. He thought the whole community had neglected those signs of the times which



could not be mistaken ; and, speaking with all deference, the Bank authorities had been equally unmindful of those signs. The Bank, at the beginning of the year, in January, was exposed to a drain of gold, which continued for some period of time. It was the duty of the Bank especially, as superintending the general monetary concerns of the country, to have made earlier provision for the danger which it was clear must arise. He could not understand why they did not raise the rate of discount sooner. Many brokers and other discount houses had recourse to the Bank, on account of its great respectability. These parties, when a time of difficulty came, expected accommodation from the Bank of England ; and if the Bank suddenly turned round and refused that accommodation, it was an act of great harshness, and one which would be against the interests of the Bank itself. It was true that the Bank had a right, in a certain degree, to influence the monetary transactions of the country, but if, in January, the Bank authorities had raised the rate of discount to 5 or 6 per cent., rather than impose any arbitrary restrictions with reference to the date to which bills for discount were to run, and by timely precautions in other respects, he believed that the difficulties which existed, if not entirely, would certainly very materially have been avoided. But the whole question really at issue was, whether there should be a convertible paper currency ; whether there should be a standard of value to regulate that currency. He might be supposed to have a prepossession in favour of the measure which he had some years ago introduced ; but if the House thought it could adopt a real remedy for the present embarrassment, or cure the existing panic, no paternal regard for the measure which he had some years since carried, would prevent him from consenting to an alteration of the system which that measure effected ; but his firm belief was, that no relief would be afforded by any intermeddling with that measure. The

exchanges would not be benefited by an increase of the currency, and therefore care and caution ought to prevail, lest, in the hope of relieving present difficulties, permission was given to the Bank to issue £16,000,000 instead of £14,000,000, and that thereby the currency should be depreciated. If it were true that the present state of trade—of speculative trade—was good; supposing that the Bank was perfectly solvent; supposing that the paper currency maintained its value; supposing that the wages of labour were paid in paper, which was sure to be expended in the purchase of provisions; he entreated the House not to be tempted, by the hope of solving this difficulty, to encounter the greater danger. If the currency should be so depreciated that the Bank should not be able to maintain the payment of its paper in the gold in which that paper was professed to be paid; if the country had again to encounter all those evils from which, since 1819, it had escaped with so much pain and suffering; in his opinion this encounter could not be made, without shaking to the foundation the prosperity of the nation, and, with it, the happiness, comfort, and prosperity of the great mass of its industrious population.”

With regard to the specific motion for an advance to Irish Railways, Sir Robert Peel stated, that “although most reluctant to embarrass the government, he must express his dissent from the course proposed.” His objections to it were, first, the many purposes which rendered it unjust to the public to apply any of their resources to the promotion of private interests; and secondly, that the relief proposed was to be arbitrarily applied to one or two companies only, and not upon a general principle, to all who conformed to the same conditions. Upon a division, however, the vote was carried by a majority of 208 against 75.

A few days subsequently, the monetary question was brought, in a substantive form, under the consideration of

the House. On the 7th of May, the Chaneellor of the Exchequer announced, that both he and the Premier had received, from day to day, numerous deputations from various parts of the eountry, urging that "various steps should be taken, either by the government or by the Bank guarantied by the government, all of which would amount either to a repeal or suspension of the law by which the currency of the country was regulated." Without wishing to raise any discussion on that question, he had only to state, that government was not prepared to adopt the course urged upon them. He then gave notice, that on the Monday following he would move that the House resolve itself into committee, to consider the propriety of offering a discount for prompt payment to holders of stock in the £8,000,000 loan. Accordingly, on the 10th of May, the Chancellor of the Exchequer—the House being resolved into committee—submitted a resolution to allow discount at the rate of five per cent. to such persons as might make advancees on account of the instalments of the £8,000,000 loan on or before the 18th of June, and at the rate of four per cent. to such persons as might make advancees on the instalments on or before the 10th of September. The right honourable gentleman explained the reasons which induced him to have recourse to this measure, together with the increase of the interest on exehequer bills to 3d. a day; namely, the hope of relieving the pressure on the money-market, which exehequer bills do, not so much by the actual amount of money they would let loose, as by removing alarm and restoring confidence. He asserted that, in all respects, the money-market was casier than it had been; and he quoted the authority of the governor of the Bank for saying, that, considering the moderate demands made upon the deposit of exehequer bills—considering the amount of Dutch gold that had been imported—and considering that the exehanges from America showed a likelihood

of a cessation in the exportation of bullion, our monetary affairs had much improved in aspect during the previous few days. The proposition gave rise to a warm discussion, in which, as may be supposed, the Bank Restriction act was a prominent topic. Mr. Masterman, Mr. Newdigate, Mr. Forbes, Mr. T. Baring, Mr. Disraeli, Lord George Bentinck, spoke against it; whilst Mr. Cardwell and Sir G. Clerk feebly defended it; and Lord John Russell cautiously abstained from saying anything about it, restricting his few observations closely to the simple motion before the House. Sir Robert Peel, however, undismayed by the array of authority against him, stood forward courageously in defence of his measure, which he contended should be looked upon rather as having mitigated than aggravated the intensity of the distress, which a combination of adverse circumstances had thrown upon the country, and averted a yet greater extent of calamity than it had actually experienced. But it will be proper to give in detail a speech, which is of historical importance, coming from the author of two of the most important enactments in the statute-book. Having premised that Mr. Disraeli was wrong in stating that this particular question was now fairly in the hands of the House, he proceeded as follows:—

“Before the House formed any opinion—it could come to no decision—on the propriety of some new course with reference to the currency, he hoped it would take warning by the course of the present debate. If the act in question was as defective as it was alleged to be, it seemed extraordinary that there should be no approach to unanimity with reference to the new measure to be substituted for it. First, his honourable friend, the member for the City of London, (Mr. Masterman,) required an assurance from the right honourable gentleman, (the Chancellor of the Exchequer,) that, if he required any additional assistance to meet the



deficiency bills in July, he should draw money, not from the banking department, but from the issue department; and he said, that if this assurance were given, he was content to allow the act of 1844 to remain. This was a simple proposition, involving no change in the principle of the measure, but it appeared to him (Sir Robert Peel) that his right honourable friend was taking a course which was likely to enable him to dispense with the aid of the Bank next July; then came the honourable member for Montrose, (Mr. Hume) with a proposition that there should be an unlimited competition and free-trade in banking, and that the country banks should be allowed to issue £5 notes, and larger amounts, convertible, on demand, into gold. This proposition, if adopted, would have no tendency to diminish the gold circulation in this country, or to prevent the pressure that had arisen. Then came the honourable member for South Lancashire, with a plan for the issue of £1 notes—a temporary issue—terminable at the discretion of parliament. The honourable member might depend upon it, that, were the permission he sought once granted, the arrangement would be no temporary arrangement; or, at all events, he would find it an excessively difficult thing to recall the notes, and restore the gold circulation. Then came the honourable member for Rutland, who fairly advocated an inconvertible paper currency; and then came the honourable member for Warwickshire (Mr. Newdigate) with another view of the matter. Before, however, the House applied themselves to a remedy, let them consider well what was the nature of the evil. Let them well weigh the question whether, in seeking to apply a present relief to the distress of the country, they would not run the risk of aggravating that distress in a most material degree. He did not require a better description of the condition of the country, and of the real nature of the pressure upon it, than had been given by the honourable member for Huntingdon (Mr. T. Baring). The

honourable gentleman stated, that the country was suffering from an extraordinary scarcity of food : this was the fact. A calamity, foreseen by none, had visited us. The loss of capital, occasioned by the failure of the potato crop in Ireland, and of other crops for the subsistence of man in this country and in Ireland, had been estimated at no less than sixteen millions sterling. It was difficult to calculate the effect, under any circumstances, of the abstraction from commerce, in one year, of sixteen millions, more especially when that abstraction was occasioned by a calamity such as the dearth of food. But were we alone suffering? No. France was suffering as intensely as ourselves; Holland was suffering; Belgium, Germany, the banks of the Rhine, the north of Europe, Denmark more especially—all were suffering—all, well nigh alike, were looking to the United States of America as the source of their common supply. Do not talk of free-trade having proved a failure, when it was clear that we ourselves, in common with all the countries around us, were applying all our means to the procuring the means of subsistence. The honourable member had assigned another cause for the present distress: he had pointed to the extent of railway speculation in the past year, and spoken of the enormous amount of capital locked up in these undertakings. Here, then, was another explanation of the want of capital applicable to the ordinary purposes of commerce. There was another to be indicated, in the falling off, in the past year, of the crop of cotton, that essential material in our most important manufactures, whence had arisen, at once, an enormous deficiency in our supply of the article, and a vast addition to its cost. Was it right, then, to throw all the blame on the act of 1844? Whether they had had an inconvertible paper currency or a metallic currency, depend upon it, there was not a country on the face of the earth which could have been exposed to the treble operation of such calamities, without

feeling an amount of pressure which no issue of bank-notes could relieve. At the same time he must state, that if he felt that the great interests of the country required an alteration of the act of 1844, no feeling of false shame should induce him to throw any obstacle in the way of such alteration. That act passed in the year 1844; the Bank charter was then about to expire, and certain alterations were necessary. Those alterations, be it remembered, were not adopted without much previous inquiry. For five years previous to that period, the subject had been most carefully sifted by various committees. It could not, therefore, be said to have been a mere speculative change in the currency. The honourable member for Warwickshire said that he (Sir R. Peel) had, in 1819, drawn a flattering picture of the state and prospects of the country. He had done so; and why? To justify the government in fulfilling its engagements by a return to cash payments. But was the honourable member aware that, in 1815, with an inconvertible paper currency, several of the private banks failed. Why? Because, on the return of peace, there was that collapse which was sure to occur, after we had for a long time possessed the whole trade of the world, and had been indulging in the luxury of inconvertible paper. Was it wished that we should return to the state of things previous to 1844? Was the Bank to have a power of issue according to its own discretion? Was that the state of things desired? If they repealed the act of 1844, that would be the state of things. How had it acted in 1838? Then the Bank was left with about £600,000 in gold, and every prospect that it would be unable to fulfil its engagements. If they restored that state of things, they had no security against the recurrence of similar disasters. The object of the act of 1844 was to secure the convertibility of paper into gold, and to prevent pressure in times of danger and difficulty. It checked any issue of paper made without

reference to the exchanges, such issue purchasing merely a temporary ease, while it afterwards aggravated commercial pressure by a panic, which was sure to lead to a demand for gold. It was, in his opinion, important, that, in times of difficulty and danger, they should not be induced to run to the Bank from any doubt as to its solidity. The honourable member for Huntingdon had said that there was not, at the present moment, the least panic, but that there was severe pressure, caused by undue apprehension. Well, but what would be the state of things, if there existed any doubt as to the solvency of the Bank—if the act of 1844 had not passed? Suppose that, on the part of every country bank, there had been, during the riot of speculation of the past year, the power of making an uncontrolled issue of paper, would the state of things at present be as good as it was, severe as undoubtedly was the pressure? Was it not probable that speculation of every kind would have so increased as to have terminated in a run on the Bank? It had been said that the act of 1844 was expected to work as a measure requiring little or no direction. That was true, as far as issues were concerned; and all he regretted was, that the issue department could not have been wholly separated from the Bank. The honourable member for Shrewsbury said, that they had no right to criticize the conduct of the Bank of England; but the honourable member for Huntingdon, who was nearly as good an authority, thought that the conduct of the Bank was fairly open to criticism. That honourable member disapproved of the conduct of the Bank in August last, in reducing the rate of discount. With regard to any criticism on the conduct of the Bank in the month of August, he must leave the honourable gentleman to settle his account with the honourable member for Shrewsbury. He (Sir R. Peel) had never complained of that. What he had said was, that in the three months which followed January, 1847, when there was a



drain of gold, he did venture to say, in the presence of the honourable gentleman, that, with respect to the conduct of the Bank, he doubted if a great part of the pressure would not have been obviated if the Bank, in the month of January, when there was a full knowledge of the calamity which had fallen on Ireland, had not continued to discount at four per cent. for three months, during the continuous drain of gold. The honourable gentleman told them what had been done by the Bank in 1837, 1838, and 1839; and he ventured to give him an assurance, that if the act of 1844 had been in force in 1838 and 1839, not one of the difficulties of that time would have been obviated, for the Bank had power to issue more notes than it did. It was difficult to say what would have been the conduct of the Bank under an act which passed five or six years after that time. But the honourable gentleman had omitted to state what was the condition of the country circulation then. He would tell him what it was. In November, 1823, the bullion in the Bank was £13,760,000, and in November, 1825, it was reduced to £3,012,000. Between November, 1822, and November, 1825, while the bullion in the Bank was so reduced to £3,000,000, the amount of country-bank paper had increased from £4,000,000 to £8,000,000. From January, 1833, to January, 1834, the amount of bullion was £9,948,000; and in 1837 there was a decrease of £6,000,000, the amount being only £4,000,000; while the country-bank circulation had increased, in 1834, to £10,000,000, and in 1837 it was £11,000,000. In 1836, at the verge of the crisis, the country-bank circulation was actually £12,000,000. On the 27th of June, 1836, the bullion in the bank was £9,642,000; in 1839 it was £4,344,000. The country-bank circulation had increased to £11,740,000, when the Bank had in bullion £10,000,000; and it was £12,725,000 when the Bank had only £4,300,000. in gold. The honourable gentleman omitted, in his calcula-

tion, the whole circulation of the country banks ; but when the doctrines of the Bank, with regard to the principle of issue and the state of the foreign exchanges—although it was said that the Bank had no more concern with the foreign exchanges than with the snow on the mountains—were remembered, it must be admitted that the state of the country-bank circulation was a material element to be considered. The act of 1844 was intended for the express purpose of preventing the evil of the increase of country-bank circulation, concurrently with a decrease of the precious metals ; and it proposed limitations for the purpose of giving to the Bank greater control over paper circulation. The Bank was a public institution possessing privileges, and, among others, the exclusive circulation sixty-five miles round London. The circulation of the country banks was limited, in order that the Bank of England might exercise control over that circulation, although it was said it had a perfect right to issue as well as discount, without reference to the foreign exchanges. But the Bank would say that it has public duties, and could not regulate its affairs only with regard to the temporary interests of its proprietors ; and the honourable member for Huntingdon was correct when he said that it had great power in influencing the trade of the country. Although the issue department might provide for the variation of issue in conformity with the influx or efflux of gold, and although the law had laid down no rule for the Bank in that respect, yet parliament, in passing the act of 1844, did give rights to the Bank, and it was felt that it had the power to derange the currency ; but there was every confidence that the Bank would give up its privileges, and that the currency would be regulated by the foreign exchanges. The memorial from the Bank, which the honourable gentleman read, was before parliament in 1844. The honourable gentleman might have heard it read and discussed ; and he

might have heard the appeal which was made to the government to profit by the suggestions contained in it, and to give the government a discretionary power to the issue of paper currency. This question was dismissed; and it was foreseen that, if it were acceded to, there would be a constant demand on the government to exercise that discretion. The object of the act was to encourage caution in the Bank; and on speculators and traders, by enforcing that, in time to come, the Bank should not give accommodation under certain pressure; and that object would have been defeated if that discretion had been given. Suppose the government, in the exercise of such a discretion, had issued three millions of notes; the moment there was the slightest pressure they would have been appealed to, and all confidence in the act, and all caution, would have been removed; therefore, the government of the day declined to accept that trust, because they felt that parliament only should relax the law to which its assent had been given.

“It was from a full conviction as to the principles of banking, and that in the United States the system of convertibility had not secured the delivery of gold to the holder—it was from a conviction of the evils which it had caused in that country, from the failure of the country banks, and the abuses of the joint-stock banks, that he felt it to be his duty to propose the act of 1844. He entirely approved of the course pursued by the government, but still he could feel with honourable gentlemen who had described the pressure which was so severe, and the danger which was impending. The rise in the price of corn that day was calculated to cause very painful feelings. He was fully alive to this; but the pressure was not confined to this country; it must be expected to continue, and there must even be increased pressure on account of the rise in the price of corn. He was glad to hear from the right honourable gentleman (the

Chancellor of the Exchequer) that there were prospects of improvement. He deeply lamented the present state of affairs in the money-market, which caused embarrassment to trade and manufactures. He deeply regretted that they were suffering; and if he could be convinced that it resulted from the measure of 1844, no rigid adherence to any principle should prevent him from applying the required remedy. If he thought the relaxation of this bill would afford any cure of those evils, he would offer no impediment to any temporary relaxation that might be proposed by the government. But it was his firm belief, as at present advised, and judging from the means of information he had in his possession, that a mere temporary issue of some £2,000,000 of paper, without the increase of that capital which in point of fact was the real resource from which alone we could command the produce of other countries—such a relaxation of this measure, or the permission to issue upon exchequer bills, or by the Bank to issue notes to any given amount on other securities, would be but a temporary relief from the pressure under which the country was suffering, while it would greatly increase and aggravate the permanent evils. Look at our present position. In Europe the exchanges were slightly in our favour. There was a daily increase in the influx of coin, tending to give increased security to the Bank, and enabling it to give increased accommodation—which accommodation he trusted it would continue to give as far as it could possibly do so with safety. But lessen that confidence—turn the exchanges against us, and tell the Bank that its position would be endangered, and the convertibility of its notes would be fettered. The Bank must in that case look to the government aid against this inconvertible paper, and consult, not only its own security, (for that is subordinate,) but the best interests of the country, by securing the great object, the convertibility of paper into gold. There



was now about £10,000,000 of bullion in the Bank—fortunately there were £30,000,000 or £40,000,000 of gold (it was difficult to estimate the exact amount) in circulation in the country and in private use. In that gold circulation he believed was the foundation of the security of the Scotch and Irish banks—that was, in the certain convertibility of Bank of England notes into gold. This was an expensive process, he admitted—gold was capital, and there it differed from bank paper. They had to choose whether under the present feeling of apprehension, and the temporary pressure, they would give up the security of the present system. But if the system was good for this, it was good for all other countries; and the honourable member for Huntingdon had said that France was not suffering, and that the gold circulation of France, as compared with its paper, was in the proportion of 80 to 30. Supposing the case was reversed, and the paper was 80, and the coin 30, would the government of France have felt the same confidence in dealing with the difficulty? No: it was because of the existence of the present expensive system of circulation (and expensive he admitted it to be,) that they were secured against a demand for gold as the consequence of internal famine. His advice to them was, not on account of any fancied immediate or temporary advantages to issue one-pound notes in the place of sovereigns. He trusted they would be able to pass over the present difficulty; and without some great calamity or paramount necessity which should deprive them of all discretion, he implored the House not to tamper with those principles which it had the greatest difficulty in re-establishing after the long experience from 1798 to 1819. If they obtained present relief, by endangering the convertibility of paper, his belief was that they would inflict a severe blow on the prosperity of the country, and do more to shake the confidence of property, than by any other course they could

take. He trusted, however, they would feel that it would be wholly at variance with experience, and unworthy the character of this country, that, because of any temporary pressure, they should relinquish an advantage which he firmly believed to be essential to the welfare of all classes of the community, and, above all, of that class which ought, by the certainty and fixity of the circulating medium, to be assured of a command over the necessaries of life. He should give his support to the government in their adherence to the principles of the currency, trusting they would take every step in their power to prevent the necessity of embarrassing the Bank by calling on them for assistance."

This speech closed the debate of the evening. The government proposition was agreed to.

Shortly after this, the pressure upon the money-market manifested some signs of relaxation; the Bank began to discount first-class paper at 5 per cent.; wheat fell some 15s. or 18s. a quarter, the best British, which, in the middle of May, had been quoted at from 100 to 110, the quarter, being, in the first week of June, at 85 to 90; whilst consols had improved to 88, with an upward tendency. In short, the crisis appeared to have passed away, and parliament had not further to discuss the principles of the Bank Restriction act during the session.

## CHAPTER VI.

## THE EDUCATION GRANT.

ALTHOUGH the subject of National Education was one which had engaged the attention of the leading statesmen of both the great political parties, it had, within a comparatively recent period, begun to assume additional importance. It was felt that Great Britain was behind the rest of the world in the means it adopted for securing the education of the humbler classes; and that although public and private charity, aided by the ministers of religion, had long been endeavouring to cope with the mighty evils of popular ignorance, a large proportion of the young children of our toiling millions were growing up in a state of semi-barbarism. England, it was discovered, possessed many school-houses—indeed as many as were wanted—but an insufficient number of qualified teachers, and a woeful lack of scholars, in comparison with the wants of the population. The subject, however, was one that was surrounded with peculiar difficulties, of a nature to induce statesmen to refrain from meddling with it on light grounds. Differences of religious opinion were the bane of the question; and the mutual jealousies of the Church Establishment, the Dissenters, and the Roman Catholics, rendered the task of him who should presume to view it from a height above the contending claims of either, or to take it up on behalf of any one of them, a task of no ordinary courage, especially if the statesman so patriotic, either was, or expected at any future time to become, a minister. Nevertheless, it was utterly impossible, in the face of the educational destitution of the children of

the poorer classes to neglect the warning cry that was continually raised by the men who prophesied of coming danger, if the new generation, born in the lap of civilization, were not made sharers in her bounties, to the extent at least of being taught to read and write.

Public opinion had so far ripened upon the subject, that the first grant towards this object was made in 1833, the amount being £20,000.

This sum continued to be granted annually until 1839, when the committee of the privy council on education was appointed, and the vote increased to £30,000. Subsequently the grant was increased at various intervals; in 1842 to £40,000, in 1844 to £75,000, and in 1845 to £100,000. By a minute of council of the year 1833, the advances in aid out of these funds were restricted to schools in connexion with the National Society or the British and Foreign School Society, and founded upon a report from one of them. In 1839, however, the committee laid down a rule that they would be ready to consider other applications not coming from those societies, but that such cases must be special ones, and the aid given to them be considered as special. It was also laid down, that in all such schools "the authorized version of the Scriptures" should be used. The subject was still in the same position at the period of history which we are now considering, although hints had been thrown out by the Marquis of Lansdowne that the committee did not consider themselves "precluded from preparing and agreeing to another minute, by which aid might be given to other schools, in cases in which it might be thought fit, considering the constitution of such schools, that such aid should be granted." With regard to Roman Catholic schools, Lord John Russell stated in the House, (April 15,) that "he was not prepared to say, that there might not be cases of Roman Catholic schools in which it might be fit to give



aid ; but the terms on which such aid was to be given would require mature deliberation."

It is necessary to premise these few points in the history of this question, as they serve to illustrate the debate which took place in this session of parliament, and which violently agitated the feelings of various religious bodies throughout the country. It may be added, that although the government hesitated to adopt a more liberal policy in the disposition of a grant of money to this great national purpose, and although they did not see fit to enlarge the circle within which the blessings of education would be bestowed ; they, by a minute of council dated August 25, 1846, projected a scheme for giving increased efficiency to the machinery already in operation, including a system of rewards and pensions to teachers, &c. This minute also recommended that "all schools under the inspection of the privy council should be visited at least once in each year." This minute had not hitherto been acted upon, and excited a good deal of interest and discussion. Various questions were from time to time put, both to the Marquis of Lansdowne in the Upper, and to Lord John Russell in the Lower House, as to the principles upon which, with regard to this question, they proposed to act for the future. The replies which were given proved satisfactory to neither party. At length, on the 19th of April, Lord John Russell, in moving for the annual grant of £100,000, entered upon a long statement explanatory of the intentions of the government.

After animadverting upon the conduct of those who had exaggerated and misrepresented these intentions, and even sought to intimidate honourable members from the exercise of their duties, by holding out to them the threat of losing their seats in parliament at the ensuing general election ; his lordship said, that it had been always his opinion, that the interests of education could never be efficiently

promoted, until they had taken into consideration the position and prospects of the schoolmaster. Unless these were improved, it would be quite hopeless to expect to secure the services of men of talent and ability in the business of education. No occupation could be of more importance to the country than that of the schoolmaster, and he believed it would be his duty in some future year to propose that pensions should be given to those who were worn out in the business of teaching. It was said, that it was a mistake for the state to give any grant in aid of education. He would not then enter into the question at large, but would only observe, that while the state imprisoned for crime—while it transported, and sometimes executed criminals, he could not think that it was justified in making no efforts whatever for the prevention of crime, or for the education and enlightenment of the people. It was said that there was no necessity for state interference, as the education of the people might be left to voluntary efforts. With this proposition he could not agree, for its fallacy was proved by the statistics, which were open to them all to refer to; and it was to be lamented, that where the state did give instruction (as in the case of prisoners) it was only when the parties receiving it had been already implicated in, and convicted of crime. It had been said that such large masses of the community were steeped in crime and vice, that it was hopeless to reach or reform them: this he could not assent to. A good plan of education must, at all events, reach a portion of them, and produce favourable effects. It was no longer a question as to the church undertaking the education of the whole people; the church no longer arrogated to itself the right of educating the people according to the established religion of the state. All that was required was, that in schools belonging to the Church of England, the Liturgy should be taught, but that in schools belonging to the Dissenters there should be no such require-

ment. This was carrying out the principle of religious liberty, and the Dissenters ought, therefore, to be satisfied with it. It might be true, that, under this scheme, a larger proportion of money would go to the schools of the Established Church than to those of any other religious persuasion; but this made no difference as to the principle, but was attributable to the greater number of the members of the Established Church. This plan was not to be considered a system of state education, but merely a system in aid of voluntary education, imposing upon existing schools no terms which were not consistent with the rules and regulations which had been laid down by their founders. He did not agree with those who contended that government should have confined its attention to a system of secular education; nor did he think that the schoolmaster should be placed in the position of a state-officer, whose duty it was to attend wholly to the secular instruction of the people, and have no concern whatever in their religious education. Whatever application the government might hereafter deem it to be its duty to make for a grant in favour of Roman Catholic schools, it was not intended that they should share in any portion of this £100,000. If aid should be subsequently extended to the Catholic schools, it would be done with the greatest caution, excluding from its participation monastic schools, or such as were connected with monasteries in this country. Of the £500,000 which had been expended for the purposes of education during the previous few years, not one shilling had been given to purely Roman Catholic schools; and, with respect to this grant, it did not appear desirable to throw a stumbling-block in the way of the government scheme, by departing from the existing minutes of council. The scheme was, he confessed, imperfect, but he, nevertheless, submitted it to the favourable consideration of the House; and, whatever might be the result, it would be always a consolation to him to

reflect, that he had made an attempt to lessen the empire of ignorance, and raise the people of this country to a prominent position in the scale of intelligence amongst the nations of the world.

The motion was met by an amendment, moved by Mr. T. Duncombe, in which he proposed to suspend the granting of the rate till after an inquiry had been made upon the subject. The amendment also censured the government for their conduct; but this portion of it was subsequently withdrawn.

In the debate that ensued, Mr. Macaulay met the objection of the Dissenters, by showing them that they were interested, in common with the rest of the community, in promoting the education of their fellow-men, even though differing in religious tenets from themselves.

“He would not,” he said, “allude to the objection, that this system would interfere with religious opinion, but it was impossible for anybody not to admit that the system which was proposed was perfectly free from partiality. It was impossible to conceive a principle of stricter impartiality as between the church and the dissenting sects. Wherever any sect prevailed, there the teachers would, for the most part, belong to that sect. The adoption of this plan of education would in no way injure the Dissenters; and he hoped that the Dissenters, when all momentary irritation on the subject had passed over, would unite as Englishmen and Christians, though they yet continued to be nonconformists. Every sect was equally interested in giving a good education to the members of another. It was the interest of all that the great body of the people should be educated. He ventured to say that, in the time of Lord George Gordon’s riots, the property of a churchman was as likely to be burned by a person connected with the church, as by a dissenter. He totally denied that they were calling on men to contribute money for the education of the people, without giving them any advantage. The education of the



people was just as much a matter of common interest as was the defence of their coast; and each man, no matter what sect he might belong to, had an interest in the education of his fellow-man."

On the third night of the debate, Sir Robert Peel made a speech, in which he maintained the right of the Roman Catholic schools to participate in the pecuniary grants of the state, and showed that he went beyond the Whig government in the liberality of his views upon this question. Sir Robert Peel said:—

"Although I feel it to be wholly unnecessary to add anything to the arguments by which the motion of the noble lord at the head of the government has been supported, yet I should be unwilling to permit the House to proceed to a division, without shortly stating the grounds on which my concurrence will be given to the motion of the noble lord. Considering the position which, for five years, I held in the councils of the crown; considering the connexion I had with the appropriation of the education vote during that period, as a member of the committee of council on education; considering the opposition which the present government has had to encounter in proposing a measure, the main outlines and principles of which I cordially approve; I think it is incumbent upon me not to shrink from taking my full share of any unpopularity which may attach to this course of proceeding. I am perfectly willing to admit that there are circumstances connected with the measure which I think are deserving of mature consideration. In 1839 I fully shared in the objections which were urged to proceeding by a single vote of this House, in reference to a measure of such importance as that of devising even an imperfect scheme of general education. I still think that the same objection exists. I think there will be great advantage in adhering to the ordinary course, and in submitting to the deliberation of both

Houses the regulations under which the education of the people is intended to be conducted. I think, further, that there is an evil in excluding the House of Lords from an opportunity of full consideration of this subject, by leaving to them no alternative but a complete acquiescence in, or a peremptory rejection of, the measure. But, with my views of the importance of making some progress in mitigation of the monstrous evils which have attended the neglect of public instruction, and seeing the probable consequences of insisting on the opinion which I gave in 1839, in refusing my assent to any measure connected with education, unless it had the legislative sanction of both Houses of parliament, in the shape of an act of parliament, I will not incur the risk of further delay, by insisting on the objections which I urged at that period. I feel that I cannot, with propriety, now insist on those objections; for, during the six years that have elapsed since that time, there has not only been acquiescence on my part, but on the part of this House, in giving to the privy council the exercise of those powers.

“In 1842, when the late government assumed power, the vote given to the privy council did not exceed £30,000; and it was by our advice that it was increased to £75,000, and afterwards to £100,000. We being charged with the responsibilities of government, and having the support of a great majority, did not think it necessary to adopt any other course: I say, considering all those things, and the increase of the vote, by the advice of the crown to parliament, from £30,000 to £100,000 a year, without requiring any alteration in the channel in which it was to be appropriated, I should be pursuing an unworthy course, if I now attempted to throw an impediment in the way of a more perfect application of a remedy to the evils of which we all complain. But has nothing occurred since 1842? Have we not made the attempt

to proceed by bill with reference to education? and what has been the result? When the late Secretary of State for the Home Department, from a deep sense of public duty, exposed himself to the obloquy with which he was assailed in attempting to introduce a measure respecting the education of factory children, he thought he should mitigate opposition if he proceeded by public enactment. Accordingly, we did not then proceed by vote; we made the attempt to introduce some further facilities with regard to education by legislative enactment; but we met with no greater encouragement with respect to the bill than the noble lord has met with now; and my right honourable friend, very much to my regret, was obliged to abandon his attempt to unite all parties in devising some scheme by which, without the violation of conscience, greater facilities for education might be provided. Now, then, in 1847, seeing the failure of the attempt to proceed by legislation—seeing the evidence which exists, that there is no sufficient provision for the education, either intellectual or religious, of the swarming thousands of our juvenile population, I am ready to consent to any measure which, without violating the conscientious scruples of any class of Christians, may afford some remedy for this monstrous defect.

“In the course of this debate, there has been much and most able argument with reference to the authority and duty of the state to interfere with respect to the education of the people, and in this House there has been but a faint denial of that duty. And I should apprehend on the part of the great body of her Majesty’s subjects who dissent from the doctrines of the Church of England, there is no disposition to deny the importance of education, or to deny the duty of the state to promote that education by every means in its power. I apprehend the chief objection of the non-conforming body to this proceeding on the part of the government,

is not so much a denial of the right of the state to promote education, as a doubt whether or not the measure proposed is really calculated to promote that end. The non-conforming body, if they are consistent with their former declarations on this subject, can only object to this measure, on the ground that the voluntary system is better calculated to promote education than any interference on the part of the state; and if I could believe that non-interference on the part of the state was calculated to facilitate education more than such interference, I should at once admit that in this country, with such a difference of opinion on religious subjects prevailing, whatever right the state might have, it would be better to avoid such interference; but I think the evidence is conclusive that the voluntary principle has failed. I believe, if we could know the real extent of this evil—if we could have presented to us a full account of all the crime that has been generated by ignorance—if we could know what has really taken place within the last fifty years—if we could know how much the evil example of the parent has introduced infection into the character and disposition of the child—if we could know how much of violence and of rapine, how much of crime against both life and property has been caused by the neglect of education—if we could know how many immortal souls have during that period been ushered into the presence of their Creator and their Judge, ignorant of the great truths and principles of Christianity, I think, sir, if we could show all this, we should be disposed to shudder at our own neglect, and to endeavour without delay to remedy the evils of the past.

“Sir, I look to the volumes of evidence which have been presented within the last few years—and I hold in my hand one of those volumes—the report of the commissioners who were appointed to inquire into the state and condition of children employed in several districts. This single report



refers to the condition of the children in north Somersetshire, the west riding of Yorkshire, Cheshire, Derbyshire, and North and South Wales. The evidence has been collected, and the opinions are expressed by men of the highest integrity and the greatest talent, and they uniformly came to the same conclusion, that there is complete degradation in many parts of this country on account of the neglect of education. I believe we are little aware of the extent to which that neglect prevails. We see returns of the number of children educated, but we hardly inquire what is the real state of the education of these children. We see that here is a population containing some 400,000 or 500,000 children, and that 300,000 of them are educated, and 200,000 are without any education whatever—and we are shocked at the disproportion—but if we were really acquainted with the nature of the education which has been given to the 300,000, our reflections would be still more bitter. I have not come to a conclusion on this subject without having maturely considered the weight of evidence. I know that a reference to documents of this kind is not very palatable, but it is of much more importance than mere speculative argument. Now, I will take a district of great importance—the district of Oldham—and I look to the evidence of a gentleman who is the curate of St. James's, in the parish of Oldham; and, Sir, this is the account which he gives of the state of the educated classes in that parish, the provision made for education, and the nature of the education they receive. I am now considering the question, which is the main one, whether it be safe to trust to the voluntary principle for the education of the poor, and whether or not we can safely assent to the doctrine that the state ought not to interfere. This gentleman says: "There is in this district no public day-school whatever. I have made several attempts to establish one, but in vain. I have had assistance from the National Society

and the parliamentary grant, to establish a public day-school, and I have had a building erected ; but an attendance of scholars cannot be got so as to pay a master, and it is now four years since all hope of success has been given up. One of the rooms has been lately let to a person to keep a school on his own responsibility, but three masters have attempted it without success ; the last gave up last week, saying ‘ he could get plenty of scholars, but no pay.’ ” Now, observe, that district, and it is not a bad specimen, has no public day-school whatever. It is true there are Sunday schools—the persons employed in mines and collieries have less objection to their children attending the Sunday schools, because it does not interfere with their working during the week ; and, therefore, they are returned as educated children. But this is his statement of the attendance at the Sunday school. He says, ‘ As a means of religious instruction, it is obvious that schools composed as these are must be imperfect in the extreme ; as secular schools, they do harm by lowering people’s estimation of the value of secular instruction, and making them contented with less than they ought to have.’ Therefore, you have no day-schools ; you have none of the habits which a day-school would infuse ; and yet these are among the educated returns : and I think the clergyman of whom I speak may well draw the conclusion, that attendance on Sunday schools alone is not only an imperfect mode of education, but that it does more harm than good ; that secular instruction there is worse than useless, and religious education is almost as imperfect. The evidence of the boys themselves is most important. Here is a boy examined, fifteen years of age : he says he has been at Sunday school five or six years, and has only learnt to read his letters. Well, then, there’s another boy, who states that he went to a day school—he does not know how long—can’t read or write ; he goes to a Sunday school sometimes, and sometimes

to a Methodist chapel. Now, within the course of a few months there have been attempts made to induce masters to take charge of that school, and they have left their employment; the parents have been unwilling to send their children, or at least to pay for them; and is not that a proof that the voluntary principle cannot be relied upon to ensure the attendance of a competent schoolmaster?

“And what is now proposed? To elevate the condition of the schoolmaster, to exalt his condition in society, and to give him encouragement by the aid of the government. As to the patronage to be gained by the government, the objection is too futile to be urged in this House; but I consider the most important part of these minutes of council is, their tendency to raise the character of the schoolmaster. Why, any one who has acted on the committee of the privy council must know, that as soon as a schoolmaster has become competent to his duties, as soon as he has distinguished himself by his ability and acquirements, the tenure of his office becomes precarious. Temptations are held out, by merchants and manufacturers, to any one of them who has acquired a knowledge of arithmetic, and has distinguished himself by his capabilities and integrity, and he is tempted, by the prospect of double salary and a less irksome task, to undertake other duties. How can you expect otherwise of them, seeing that their office is not respected, and that it holds out no prospect of permanent provision? How can you expect that you can retain the services of good schoolmasters, unless you teach them that their office is honourable, and hold out a prospect, that, when they are incapacitated from performing its duties, they will obtain some provision for retirement? That part, therefore, of the plan, which is intended to improve the condition of the schoolmaster, has my most cordial concurrence. I deeply regret that this minute is not approved by the nonconformists. I entertain for that body

a great respect; and I have shown, in the instance of the Dissenters' Chapels bills, that I was not unwilling to incur obloquy and risk in order to do justice to the dissenting body; and, attached as I am to the Established Church, and desirous as I am of the pre-eminence of that Church, I should be sorry to gain for her any latent or increased advantages as regards education, if thereby injustice was done to the Dissenters. It is impossible to forget the services which the Dissenters have rendered to the cause of education. When the Established Church was indifferent, an example of zeal in that respect was set her by the non-conformists; and if I thought that their objections to this minute were just in themselves, deeply as I am impressed with the necessity for this remedy being applied to the existing state of things, though I might give my support to this proposition, it would be but a reluctant one, and the satisfaction I should feel in my acquiescence in it would be much modified. But, having deeply considered those objections, I cannot think that they are founded in justice. The principle on which this aid is granted is a fair one. The minute adopts the voluntary principle. That principle is not suspended, but is only set in force through the intervention of the minute. A voluntary subscription for the support of the schoolmasters is essential, before a vote of money is granted to aid in increasing their salaries. It is open to the Dissenters to take advantage of this, as well as the Established Church, and yet they complain of partiality. What has been the conduct of the Established Church for the last ten years? Impressed with the magnitude of the evil, and the necessity for a remedy, she has waived all objections. Nor is she seeking to obtain any indirect advantage by means of this vote. But if the Church is more zealous, and if she contributes more, on what principle can you withhold aid from her, in proportion to those contributions? It is said that the Established Church will receive eighteen-



twentieths of the vote. Is it not by her superiority in point of numbers? and if so, is it not just that it should be so? and if she exhibits superior zeal and liberality, does not that give her a claim to increased assistance? Try it by what principle you will, you can urge no objection against this, or complain of any supposed advantage obtained by the Established Church.

“I do not deny that the Established Church is powerful, and I rejoice that she is so. I think that power is increasing; and why? It is my firm belief that she has obtained an increasing hold on the affections of the people of this country—increasing, because she has awakened to a sense of the magnitude of her duties. It is my firm belief that the Church has obtained an increased hold on the respect and veneration of the people, by her willingness to submit to timely and salutary reforms. She has consented to a reduction in the emoluments of her higher orders, and devoted them to the increase of accommodation and the advantage of her inferior members; and by this conduct she has greatly added to her power. I think this power has been legitimately gained. It is not by means of government grants that her influence has been increased. That is a mistake. She would have been as powerful without them. What is the reason of this increase of power in the Church? Why, it is the power which is derived from educating the people. I do not say it invidiously as regards the Dissenters, because I believe they are actuated by the same principle, and that all persuasions attend to this important point; but the influence of the Church has been increased by her conduct in this respect: it will continue to be so; and if you give government aid to the Church, her legitimate influence will not be diminished; and I rejoice that it will be so. The principle of this grant is one of perfect equality. It is on this ground that I support this proposal, and find myself unable to vote for the motion

of the honourable member for Finsbury. We have had abundant time for debate ; the facts are well known. If we sift the evidence we possess, no further inquiry is necessary to convince us that we do not provide sufficient education for the countless millions engaged in the operations of industry. A question of importance arises in this discussion, which does not relate either to the Church, or to what are usually called Dissenters—I mean as regards the Roman Catholics. I am of opinion that no system of general education, even in England, can be complete, which excludes the Roman Catholics.” [Lord John Russell here made some observation.] “The noble lord says there is no alteration of the principle of the minute of 1839. In this respect it is different. You are about, practically, to make this change in the principle ; you are about to admit to a participation in the advantages of this vote, a portion of the dissenting community which has hitherto been excluded. Hitherto the Wesleyans have not practically participated in the vote. They were not in connexion with the National School Society, nor the British and Foreign School Society ; and any society not in connexion with those societies was excluded ; and the Wesleyans received no pecuniary advantage from the vote. You are now about to alter that principle in that respect ; you have assured the Wesleyans that the rule is not applicable to them—that their schools are entitled to aid, and that their authorities will be consulted with regard to inspection. Surely, so far as the Roman Catholics are concerned, there should be no material difference. In point of feeling, as well as of morals, you should extend the sphere of your bounty ; and the more that sphere is extended, the more marked will be the exclusion. I think the time has come—and I am the more anxious to avow this opinion, because I believe the avowal will be unpopular—when justice and good policy require

that you should give mature consideration to this claim of the Roman Catholics. Let us look at the question, without insisting on the operation of this or that minute, or on the exclusion of the Roman Catholics because they are not connected with the National School Society, or the British and Foreign School Society. You are about to extend the system on which you have been acting, and I do not see how you can continue the exclusion of the Roman Catholics. I know, as my right honourable friend has said, that it might be expedient to postpone this question for some months. I do not wish that there should be a precipitate measure, but yet I am not disposed to yield the opinion which I entertain. Take the case of the Roman Catholic population of Liverpool or Manchester. There is in Manchester a district called the Irish Town, which contains 60,000 or 70,000 persons. What is the class they belong to? They are distinguished for industry and good conduct, and they give to the manufacturers the advantage of their labour. They have no natural protectors: there are no wealthy manufacturers of their persuasion, who can have regard to their spiritual concerns, or supply ample means for their education. Here, then, are 60,000 or 70,000 of the poorer classes; and how is their education attended to? I confess I cannot conceive a more urgent case, not merely so far as the intellectual advantages of the Roman Catholics are concerned, and in relation to the principle that such a state of things is productive of crime, and barbarism, and degradation, on which we are all agreed; but is it not for the advantage of the Protestant community that this Roman Catholic population should not be so immersed in ignorance? So far as their condition is concerned, there could not be a stronger claim on the provident and parental aid of the government. I will not be influenced by any spirit of party, or by the observations of the noble lord as to the abstinence

of government during the last five years to make this provision. It may be that it ought to have received attention earlier, but if so, that is but an additional reason why we should attend to it now. It is the prevailing opinion of the House, that it is just and politic to make this provision. I do not deny the difficulties and importance of the subject, and that Protestants may attend these schools; but I believe it is generally found, that Roman Catholic schools are intended for the education of Roman Catholics only; but if any of these schools are intended for a joint education, is it just on your part that the principle of exclusion should be applied to them?

“I may be told that it is a violation of principle to aid in any way the teaching of religious error; but my belief is, that you are more likely to soften the minds of the Roman Catholics—that you will be more likely to conciliate them towards the Protestant religion,—nay, without making any other attempts at conversion than the enlightening of their understanding—that you will be more likely to prepare their minds for the reception of the truths which you yourselves profess—than if you doom them to perpetual exclusion from civil advantages. Would you, in deference to religious principles, prefer having a number of uneducated and hostile savages in the state, to having the Roman Catholics educated under your own eyes? I am persuaded that it will not only be for the civil advantage of the state, but for the advantage of Protestantism itself, that you should provide—without any compromise of principle—for the intellectual and secular education of Roman Catholic children;—for probably that secular education is all you will be called on to give, in the case of schools kept exclusively for Roman Catholics. I heard the right honourable gentleman the Secretary of State (Sir George Grey) with great satisfaction, for it appeared to me—seeing a temper in the House which was not expected—



that his speech held out a greater hope of an earlier settlement of this question, than I was led to entertain from the preceding speeches of the members of the government.

“ I quite understand the difficulties which encompass the subject, and the difficulties with which the government have to contend, and the danger of a failure of their efforts. I am ready to admit that in order to secure not only an ultimate and superior good, but this present imperfect one, it is wise, in the actual state of public opinion in this country, to proceed with caution and hesitation. But I wish to express my opinion, that in making this change in the minutes of council, and in the system of public instruction, the noble lord has engendered the necessity, in point of justice and of policy, of providing means by which aid can be given to Roman Catholic schools. I tell my honourable friend (Sir R. Inglis) fairly, so resolved am I—I see it so great an evil, and think it so important that an immediate remedy should be applied—that I will be little disposed to throw any obstructions in the way of her Majesty’s government. I think there is a prospect of passing this measure. I understand, from the declarations of the government, that we may rely on an early consideration of the case of the Roman Catholics ; and I for one will not be inclined to prejudice the consideration of this measure, by any compulsion on the government to propose their scheme of Roman Catholic education. But I call on them, after the declarations that have been made, not to accept the support of any body to the present scheme, under the erroneous impression that the Roman Catholics are to be excluded. If there is a probability of an early dissolution of parliament, it may be more important that there should be no misunderstanding on this subject. And if the government recognize the principle which I understand them to recognize ; let them freely avow that recognition, and give fair notice to all parties, that, though there may be some delay in preparing

an additional minute, yet that they recognize the principle ; that they do not mean to take one class of Christians, and of her Majesty's subjects, and doom them to perpetual exclusion, on account of their religious tenets. I entreat of persons of all religious persuasions, to look back on what has taken place with respect to this subject of education. The want of it in this country arose originally from indifference to the subject. Then it was supposed that religious opinions would be endangered. That impression passed away, and indifference again succeeded. From that indifference the dissenting body was the first to be awakened. They set the example of activity in the cause of education. They were followed by others, and of late years there was great activity displayed, but our own religious differences were the great obstruction to education. All asserted that education was a dangerous subject, because each body was afraid that some other body, from whose religious opinions they differed, would obtain some advantage by it. The Dissenters opposed it one day, because they believed the Church would gain some advantage ; and the Church opposed it another day, for fear of the recognition of dissent ; but what, in the mean time, was becoming of the 800 children who were born every day, of the 300,000 of our population who were born annually, and brought up in a state of ignorance ? While we are dallying and squabbling on these points of difference, we were neglecting that which ought, to all Christians, to be a deep subject of consideration, namely, the enlightenment of all in Christian truth—the improvement of their intellects, and the teaching of them the principles of that religion in which, notwithstanding their differences on minor matters, all were agreed as to the main points.

“ Sir, I believe that true charity, that true policy, and true regard for religious truth, enjoin on us to lay aside those minor differences, and to teach the children of all sects the

great truths of Christianity. I am for a religious education as opposed to an irreligious one. I do not believe that a purely secular education would be acceptable to the people of this country. I think, to use the words of the noble lord, that it would be only a half-education, the most important part of which was neglected. But, believing it to be for the interest of religion itself; believing, above all, that it is for the interest of the Protestant religion, which shrinks not from the light, which courts inquiry, and rejoices in the spread of knowledge; believing it especially to be for the interest of that Protestant religion, which I myself profess, that the people should not be left in a state of ignorance, and that by receiving intellectual culture, their minds would be better prepared for the reception of those great truths which are, in the first instance, the foundation of all religion; and that that religion which most courts inquiry, and most inculcates self-judgment, would be likely to be most promoted thereby; I will support the proposition of her Majesty's government."

The House listened to this speech with its usual attention to all that came from the mouth of Sir Robert Peel, although there were not wanting expressions of dissatisfaction on the part of those who were desirous of a more comprehensive system. Upon a division, Mr. Duneombe's amendment was rejected by an overwhelming majority—372 to 47.

Upon a subsequent evening, on bringing up the report, Sir William Molesworth brought forward the claims of the Roman Catholics in a substantial form.

It was upon this occasion that a scene of warm reerimination took place between Sir Robert Peel and Sir Robert Inglis, member for the University of Oxford, and the representative of the high-church party in the House. The feuds and animosity of 1829 appeared to be revived for the moment, by the tolerant tone adopted by the late prime minister in

reference to his Roman Catholic fellow-subjects. Sir Robert Inglis, after expressing his dissent from the proposal involved in Sir W. Molesworth's amendment, looking upon it only as "the narrow edge of the wedge," by which more extensive concessions to popery were hereafter to be enforced, proceeded as follows:—

"The honourable member had claimed support in no measured terms from his right honourable friend the late prime minister of England, who, as he (Sir R. Inglis) grieved to think, had, in the present instance, bid more highly for popular applause, and for the support of the Roman Catholic body, and perhaps of the extreme liberals of every sect or persuasion, than his noble friend at the head of the government, as he ventured to hope, would ever permit himself to do. Seeing that the two great leaders in that House were united in this cause, he was sure it well became the people of this country, and it became the House as representing the people, to bear fully in mind what was the intention, the deliberate and expressed intention, of those to whom the confidence of the country had been so largely conceded. First of all, the education of the people was, by the constitution of the country, confided to the Church; next, it was confined to those who used the authorized version of the Scriptures; now it was proposed to extend it to all Christians. There, at any rate, his right honourable friend the late prime minister stopped." [Mr. M. Milnes here made some observation.] "Yes, he did stop there; and his honourable friend the member for Pontefract must not indulge himself in the hope of securing the support of the right honourable baronet, the late prime minister of England, for any plan of educating Jews, Turks, infidels, and heretics. In reference to Roman Catholic Christians, the right honourable baronet said, in substance, that he would not be a party to any compulsion which might place the noble lord, his successor in



office, in any difficulty on that occasion. He hoped he might tell his right honourable friend, that, so far from that being a legitimate apprehension, he indulged the hope that not even all his (Sir R. Peel's) participation and support would enable the noble lord to carry into operation a system so repugnant to the original genius of the constitution of England, and to the feeling prevailing amongst the great mass of the people, if tested at that moment. He did not refer to a general election, but he took, as the exponents of the opinions of the people, their publications, and the tone of their general meetings. The great mass of the people of England were, he believed, at that moment distinctly hostile to any further concession to the Roman Catholics; and they would not be misled by the kind of threat so repeatedly urged in that House ever since the Roman Catholics and their claims first came before it, forty or fifty years ago—as to numbers imposing an obligation to concede what was asked. His right honourable friend had lent himself to that species of exaggeration to which the House was so accustomed to listen, stating, that he believed the Roman Catholics in this country amounted to 800,000. Now, according to the report of the registrar-general, tested by the proportion of their marriages to those of the whole population, the total number of Roman Catholics in England was less than 300,000. The right honourable baronet had been asked by himself on a former occasion, whether he would pledge himself at no future period to support the payment of Roman Catholic priests. He refused to give such a pledge; and, therefore, if he were in power, the country would have no security against the payment of the Church of Rome in Ireland. He felt thoroughly satisfied that the noble lord would unflinchingly persevere in what he had determined. The declarations made by the noble lord were quite unexpected by the great body of the people, and especially by those who had been in immediate communication with him

within the last month; and while he admitted that the noble lord did not violate any pledge by the course which he was pursuing, he grieved at the course which he had intimated his intention to pursue, because he believed that the concession was wrong, and that, when the first step had been taken, it would be difficult, if not impossible, not to proceed."

Thus assailed by a man whom in all the private relations of life he highly respected, Sir Robert Peel immediately rose, and spoke as follows:—

"Sir, when my honourable friend expresses any opinion in this House, however emphatic may be the declaration of that opinion, I have such respect for his integrity and character, that I always believe he is expressing the opinion which he sincerely and conscientiously entertains. Yet I cannot but think that my honourable friend would show more of true toleration, if he would extend to others that principle which others are willing to apply to himself, and to give them credit for having no other object in view, in expressing opinions which may differ from his own, than to promote the public interest, and do justice between different classes of her Majesty's subjects. My honourable friend imputes to me, that my object, in delivering my opinions on Friday night, was to outbid the noble lord at the head of the government, and to attempt to conciliate Roman Catholic and liberal support. Sir, I assure my honourable friend that he does me great injustice; for I have no object whatever of a political kind, like that of outbidding the noble lord. And if I had any political object of a personal nature in view, I greatly doubt whether it be prudent, when you are revising and reconstituting a system of public education, to express the opinions which I took with regard to the justice of not excluding the Roman Catholic subjects from a participation in its benefits. Sir, I think my honourable friend might have remembered the course which I took with regard to

Maynooth, the opinions which I then expressed at considerable risk, and the great danger which we had to apprehend of the loss of popular favour, or of office; and I think he might have remembered that between him and me there must be a total difference of opinion as to the principles involved in giving aid to the Roman Catholics for the purpose of instruction. I do not believe that we are compromising our own faith by giving that aid. If I wanted a proof that my honourable friend ought to have done me that justice which I am willing to tender him, I find it in my honourable friend's own speech; for, after hunting out the statistical returns of the registrar-general, my honourable friend finds that we have grossly overrated the Roman Catholic population of this country, and that, inferring the total population from the number of marriages, the whole number of Roman Catholics in England ought not to exceed 300,000. Well, be it so; my honourable friend shall be correct—there are not more than 300,000 Roman Catholics. Why, what political object, then, can I have in view, in recommending that justice should be done to the 128th part of the population? Why, I do not find that—I will not use the word concession—I do not find that any measures intended to improve the Roman Catholic population, are exceedingly popular, even in this House. I recollect that almost within a week, a measure, which had before been sanctioned by a majority of only three, was exposed to the severest ordeal, and was lost after discussion, by a majority of thirty-nine.\* So far, therefore, as the opinion of the House is an indication of the opinion of the country, I do not think my honourable friend can justly charge me with having attempted to promote any political object in the course I have taken with regard to the Roman Catholics. As to gaining the support

\* The Roman Catholic Relief Bill, introduced by Mr. Watson, which is noticed in a subsequent part.

of the liberal body, so far as the dissenting interest is connected with that body, I greatly doubt whether expressions in favour of the Roman Catholics are very likely to conciliate. But, in truth, I had no political object. I believe it to be just and politic to take the course which I recommended. Well, now, what are the imputations to which taking that course subjects me? By the honourable member for Kent there has been a charge made, not of rashness, not of impolicy, but of absolute infidelity. This is not the place to speak on such subjects, and nothing which has fallen from that honourable gentleman shall induce me to say one word which would be disrespectful of him; but as for infidelity, I cannot believe that that great God—I say it with all reverence—I cannot believe that that God, who is the ‘Author of peace, and lover of concord,’ who gave us this commandment, that we should ‘believe in the name of Jesus Christ,’ and ‘love one another’—I cannot believe that that Almighty Being will think that we are fulfilling that commandment when we hate one another—and when we allow thousands and tens of thousands of children who ought, whatever be their sect, to be taught to believe in the name of Jesus Christ, to pass through life, and to be ushered into eternity, without having ever heard the name of Jesus Christ. With respect to the present position of education in some parts of this country, it would be much better for us to make allowance for the imperfections of each other, and to proceed on the assumption, at least, that we are actuated by honest motives, although we may differ, not as to religion itself, but as to the measures connected with religion which it may be desirable to adopt. I doubt the justice, the policy, or the true charity, of meeting measures of this nature with such charges as that of infidelity.”

With regard to the general bearings of the question, as affected by Sir William Molesworth’s amendment, and the



explanations of ministers, Sir Robert Peel quietly justified the vote which he was about to give :—" It has," said he, " been my wish to avoid embarrassing, the noble lord by taking any course which would diminish the chances of ultimate success for this measure. I estimate fully all the difficulties with which he is surrounded, even in bringing forward a measure of such limited extent. My experience of office is too recent for me not to be fully aware that the position of a minister or a government is different from that of private individuals. We can state what measures we think ought to be proposed, and on what principles they should be founded ; but a minister who is anxious for the success of a particular measure, is compelled to consider the obstructions which it may meet with, and he must content himself with something short of that absolute good which he would aim at were he placed in a different position. I am surprised that the honourable baronet should have claimed my support on this occasion. On a former occasion I stated distinctly my sentiments on the general question, but, at the same time, I stated that I should not concur in any motion which would at all embarrass the further progress of this measure ; that I would not be a party to any compulsion being brought to bear on the government, if the government showed an unwillingness to adopt that which I was disposed to support. Now, I must say that I hope the honourable baronet will not press his motion. I do not say that, for the purpose of relieving myself from any difficulty, for I feel none whatever ; but after the avowal which was made by the right honourable gentleman, the Secretary of State for the Home Department, not on the compulsion of this motion, but voluntarily, two or three nights ago, and after the statement made to-night by the noble lord, that the government conceded the principle that Roman Catholics are not to be excluded, but that they pledge themselves to bring forward a

minute, when the matter has been maturely considered, for the purpose of including them ; I must say that I think the government have done nothing to disentitle them to confidence, so that an opportunity should not be given them of proceeding with this measure without the obstruction of a hostile resolution. Sir, the right honourable gentleman says, I think very properly, ‘I cannot pledge myself to the introduction of a measure at any particular time, but I give you a full assurance with respect to the principle.’ I can easily conceive that many communications will be necessary for the purpose of making the measure complete, and that it is much more likely to be satisfactory to that body for whose good it is intended, if opportunity for that purpose be given, than if the government is at once compelled by a vote of the House of Commons to introduce a minute. I have little confidence in impromptu measures on such a subject as this. I do believe that it is the intention of the government to do what is just ; and having that confidence, I cannot concur in a vote which would imply mistrust, and prevent them from having an opportunity of giving to the matter the consideration which it deserves. I do hope that I have now convinced my honourable friend that I have no such object as that of outbidding the noble lord. I disclaim any such intention ; and so far from wishing to embarrass the noble lord with respect to the question of education, I have seen enough of the difficulties with which he has to contend, not to feel desirous of ensuring for this measure ultimate success, rather than making this subject the arena of any party or political contest.”

On a division, the amendment of Sir William Molesworth was lost by a majority of 203 against 22 ; but the general question continued to agitate the country, and led to many turbulent public meetings in the principal towns and cities.

Upon the whole, the great question of education gained little or nothing by the discussions that took place; and if anything was proved by them, it was, that the opinion of the people of England and Scotland was not ripe enough to consider it in all its bearings; and that the secular ignorance of the masses of the population, and of the teeming myriads of the children of the poor, was considered a minor evil, to any system of public education which should provide for all sects by omitting the peculiar points of difference of each. Even Sir Robert Peel, with all his courage, did not go the whole length of meeting the difficulty.

## CHAPTER VII.

## COLONIZATION AND EMIGRATION.

THE subject of colonization, as distinguished from that of emigration, had lately begun to excite attention. Mr. Charles Buller, in an admirable speech delivered in the session of 1843, was the first man, in a prominent position in parliament, to draw the wide distinction between the two, and to impress upon the country the expediency and necessity of turning to account our vast colonial resources; but nothing further was done. It was confessed that Great Britain, a state that had never colonized, possessed colonies greater and more valuable than were ever governed under one sceptre at any period recorded in history; and it was too easily admitted, that, as conquest and emigration had produced this result, there was no necessity for commencing the new and untried experiment of colonization. A class of reasoners, whose principle is *laissez faire*, urged continually that the natural processes of emigration would relieve the mother-country of her superabundant population, with adequate celerity and efficiency, and that, to attempt to colonize, would be not only to attempt a thing beyond the power of government, but to run the risk of a costly failure. It was not, however, sufficiently considered by the advocates of this principle, that emigration, as hitherto left to its operation, had been filling with some of our best blood, the rival, and at some future day it might be the hostile, empire of the United States; and that Canada, and our other fine colonies in North America, were neglected, merely because the British government had not taken the pains to direct into them the great stream of colonization. At this period,



the only attempt to establish a colony upon anything like a system, was that of the New Zealand Company, and the public attention was not to any great extent excited by the progress of that experiment. Nevertheless, the subject was a growing one; and the unhappy state of Ireland caused the subject to be taken up by men both in and out of parliament, who, but for the calamities of the Irish people, might not have considered the question, either of emigration or of colonization, as one of any urgent importance. On the 1st of June, Lord Lincoln, who had been a prominent member of the government of Sir Robert Peel, brought forward a motion upon the subject, but apparently without any consultation with his former chief, and solely upon his own responsibility as an individual member of parliament. Lord Lincoln confined himself to the Irish importance of the question, and moved an address to the Queen, praying her to take into consideration the means by which colonization might be made subsidiary to other measures for the improvement of the social condition of Ireland; and by which, consistently with full regard to the interests of the colonies themselves, the comfort and prosperity of those who emigrate might be effectually promoted. The noble lord argued that the poor-law was inadequate, and that the measures proposed by the government as auxiliary to the poor-law, were insufficient to find permanent employment and support for the Irish population. He also endeavoured to establish, that there was in Ireland a redundancy of able-bodied labourers, that a reduction of the number was necessary, and that colonization was the best means of effecting this object. With regard to his proposal of colonization, he had no new plan to lay before the House. Our North American colonies were the chief localities he contemplated for the reception of the emigrants; but he recommended the province of Natal, on the east coast of Africa, as a place peculiarly suited for Irish colonists.

The noble lord disclaimed all feelings of a party nature in submitting the scheme, and concluded by suggesting, that an unpaid commission of three or four eminent and practical men should be appointed to consider the case, and determine upon the best plan which circumstances would admit of their adopting.

The motion was opposed by Mr. Hawes, the under secretary for the colonies, and by Mr. Vernon Smith. The last-named gentleman complained of the vagueness of the scheme, of the delay which must elapse before it could be brought to bear, and of the effect its adoption would necessarily have in stopping or discouraging the voluntary efforts which were now going on for the relief of Irish distress.

Sir Robert Peel took the opportunity to declare his sentiments upon the question, and expressed himself generally in favour of some such project as was contemplated. The right honourable baronet did not treat the subject with the depth and comprehensiveness of reasoning and illustration which it had received in the exhaustive and masterly oration of Mr. Charles Buller; but he expressed himself with sufficient emphasis and decision to excite the hopes of colonial reformers that he would hereafter render valuable aid to that, as to all the other questions of his time and country. He said, in reply to Mr. Vernon Smith:—

“I think that all the arguments which could be brought against the motion of my noble friend, may be supposed to have been adduced by the right honourable gentleman who has just sat down, one who is perfectly acquainted with all the details of colonial business, and who has also had the advantage of retirement from office, to enable him to consider the question. He has brought to the question all the acuteness of official experience, with the inestimable advantage of leisure for reflection. I shall take the right honourable gentleman’s objections in order. First of all,

the right honourable gentleman says, that the party in opposition always takes up this question, making plausible speeches about colonization; but when they get into office, they make speeches against it; it dwindles down to emigration, and all the magnificent promises resolve themselves into a very small and inefficient certainty. But what is the reason? Why, that office is so burdened with details, that its holders have no time to make the proper inquiries. The right honourable gentleman says, that Lord Howick and several others have made speeches which have created a great sensation on colonization, but, in office, have done nothing. Is it not time that we should adopt another system? Is it not time, if the scheme is really impracticable, that it should be conclusively proved so? and that the alternation which the right honourable gentleman describes between promise and performance should cease? The second argument of the right honourable gentleman was, that in this country we conduct emigration very badly; that we leave it to individuals, who go to a desert country; and that colonization by individuals is no colonization on the principle on which it used to be conducted, namely, by a person of distinction going out, surrounded by his dependents, and forming a regular colony. He says that such was the practice in ancient times. Is that impossible now? Is it not worth inquiry? Why should we think it impossible? Because the right honourable gentleman says that is the way in which the Germans conduct it. He says, that although we fail in colonization, our failure is not to be attributed to the change of times or circumstances, because a neighbouring country does conduct it exactly on the principle of ancient times, namely, by men of capital taking out whole villages, accompanied by their spiritual directors, and thus giving the colony at once an aggregate character. I think it is, at least, worth inquiry, whether or not we might adopt something of a similar

plan. The right honourable gentleman's next argument was, that if my noble friend withdrew his motion, he would be only pursuing the course which has always been pursued with similar motions. He says, that gentlemen have been in the habit of bringing forward motions which disturbed the public mind, have shown themselves masters of the subject, led the public to believe that great advantages were to be derived, but at last have withdrawn their motions in despair, in consequence of the discouragement thrown in their way by the government. The right honourable gentleman's recommendation to my noble friend is, to follow in this beaten track of all who have preceded him. It appears to me to be a conclusive reason why we should depart from that track. The right honourable gentleman proceeded to review the course of gentlemen who have successively brought this question under the notice of the House. First, there was the scheme of the judge-advocate. He, according to the right honourable gentleman, laid down general principles, but the government challenged him to produce his particular scheme. He was unwise enough to fall into the trap; his scheme was referred to the colonial office, where, with the aid of official and technical experience, it was completely damaged in all its details. The right honourable gentleman blames my noble friend for taking warning from this example, and censures him for not having his plan ready—that plan, which the honourable Under-Secretary was also disappointed in not receiving. But my noble friend, taking warning by this example, suggests only the appointment of a commission; and let me remind the House, that there are now in this country able men from the colonies, who could furnish such commission with valuable information. As to the objection that my noble friend's motion might have the appearance of a censure on the Irish policy of the government, I trust we are not now going to abandon the temper with which Irish



questions have hitherto been discussed in this House. We have fully recognized the difficulties under which the government labour; and even when they have failed, we have attributed their failure to circumstances which it was impossible to control. It is not, therefore, likely that we should, just at the close of the session, bring forward a motion which could be fairly construed into a censure on their policy. With respect to the noble lord at the head of the colonial department, as to his ability for forming a judgment on questions of this kind, I know no man on whom I should be less willing to cast reflections, on the score of ability, than on that noble lord. But the reason why the matter has not been proposed to him particularly is, that the overwhelming mass of official details renders such an inquiry as we want wholly impossible in the Colonial Office. The right honourable gentleman quotes Lord Grey. Now, if Lord Grey had been the proposer of a successful plan, I could understand why his name should be introduced as a reason for not appointing this commission. But the right honourable gentleman says that the noble Secretary for the Colonies proposed a plan of colonization in December, which he was obliged to abandon in January. That is no reason why we should desist; it only proves the great practical difficulty of dealing officially with this question. The right honourable gentleman turns next to the Irish members who are willing to contribute nine millions, and doubts their ability, under the responsibility of their heavy rates. I do not think they will be called on for anything like that amount. It is unwise to assume that Mr. Godley's plan is to be carried out to the full extent, but it is important in a discussion like this, to find that Irish members expect such immediate and future benefits from emigration, as to express their readiness to take upon themselves so large a portion of the charge. The right honourable gentleman, looking at the incum-

brances on landed property in Ireland, doubts their ability to pay this nine millions. But is it not possible to realize some advantage from the plan, even if it were made available to only 300,000 persons, instead of the 2,000,000 proposed? If we locate that number in such a manner as to enable them to report favourably to their friends at home, we shall do ten times more good than we should if we sent the 2,000,000 out at once. If you establish even 40,000 happily, you will have laid the foundation of much good for Ireland. I must here observe, that it is most gratifying to see such large remittances coming from Irishmen in Canada and the United States, to aid their friends at home in their difficulties. It is most honourable to their character, and most encouraging to colonization. It shows that Irishmen, when planted in other countries, are not inferior as colonists to other men; nay, we are told, that in Australia Paddy is called on to lead the way. But I do not speak only of the Irishmen in the United States; I must also say, that the conduct of the citizens of the United States, in raising subscriptions for Ireland, is in every way entitled to our gratitude. Some persons may have done it for a mischievous purpose, to make a parade, but much has been done in the most unostentatious manner. The committee of the Society of Friends, sitting in Dublin, have received supplies of food from persons in America, who never expected to have their names mentioned, to the amount of £57,000. My authority for this statement is Mr. Jonathan Pim, a gentleman entitled to all respect for his exertions to relieve Irish distress. I do trust that the noble lord opposite will, in considering this motion, bear in mind the conduct which has been pursued towards him and his government, and, if he have any doubt, give the benefit of it to this inquiry. I do assure him, that if its success were to be looked upon as a triumph over the government, I should not receive it with any satisfaction. I do intreat the

noble lord to consider the demands likely to be made on the property by the poverty of Ireland. I do intreat him to look at the chance that the government may be forced to the alternative of sternly enforcing the law, or of abandoning all chance of return of the money, which has been advanced for Ireland. I do not wish that country to be taught that she is to draw on England in her difficulty, and when the pinch comes, to be relieved from her obligation. I should object to it less for the loss of the money, than for the moral consequences. It is not fair to this kingdom. I would rather give a specified sum at once, than lend, with an implied understanding that the loan was never to be reclaimed. I tremble for the demands which will be made on Irish property for some time to come. I believe that the country wants a stimulus, and I think it worth while to inquire whether some means may not be found to employ and provide for a portion of the people. On one side we have a large population without employment or subsistence, and on the other we have magnificent colonies almost without population. We want now to know whether something may not be done to relieve Ireland by promoting emigration to our colonies. Your own agents—men upon whom you say you can depend—declare that emigration originates in Ireland. Let us, then, have the system carefully watched, and let us see if we may not promote such a wholesome emigration to the Canadas and to New Brunswick, as is said to be going on to South Australia. The honourable gentleman opposite says that South Australia failed at first; but you have since appointed a governor, who has converted a body of despairing paupers into a contented and even affluent population. Why may we not have similar results in the Canadas? Captain Grey is a good man and an able officer, but surely, in the range of the subjects of the Queen, we can readily find other Captain Greys. You have Lord Elgin now in the Canadas—

you admit his appointment to have been a good one. Make the passage cheaper—make better regulations—provide some security for employment for the emigrants on their arrival, and I do believe that you will have a better chance of success in emigration to the Canadas, than you can possibly have in emigration to Australia. I say nothing, sir, of former opinions. I believe it is now open to the noble lord voluntarily to defer to what is the general sense of the House on this subject; and I do trust he will enable us to try if we cannot, at this imminent crisis, arrive at some plan for the relief of Ireland, by the removal of her redundant population, and by placing them in our colonies in a position calculated to ensure their affectionate attachment to their Queen, and to the country to which they naturally belong.”

Lord John Russell followed Sir Robert Peel; and though he did not oppose the motion, threw discouragement, and almost ridicule, upon it. He thought that danger would arise from leading America and our North American colonies to suppose that we were anxious to get rid of the rubbish of our population, by shipping them off from our own shores, and landing them on theirs.

As for the proposed commission, he thought it would doubtless agree to some plan of colonization—and then leave it to the government to ask parliament for the millions that would be requisite to carry it into effect. He was not ready to advise the crown to appoint a commission immediately for the special object named by the noble lord; but he would consent to the letter of the motion, and agree to the address.

The motion, accordingly, after some further debate, was agreed to: and the great question of Colonization—imperfectly brought forward by Lord Lincoln, only partially supported by Sir Robert Peel to meet a temporary difficulty, and discouraged by a government too feeble or too lukewarm to legislate upon it—was quietly consigned to the limbo



of a commission—to await a better time for its introduction, and a more comprehensive plan, upon which it could be discussed in all its bearings.

Amongst the measures of domestic policy which occupied the attention of parliament during this session, and which the classification we have adopted has prevented us from previously recording, Mr. Fielden's bill for the regulation of the hours of factory labour, deserves mention, on account of its great social importance, as well as delicacy and difficulty. The question is one which occupied the attention of statesmen for many years, and was as warmly and pertinaciously discussed as any question of the time. The friends of humanity contemplated with pain the stunted growth and sickly aspect of our factory population, which they chiefly attributed to the effects of over-work in an unwholesome atmosphere. They called loudly upon the legislature to interpose its authority on behalf of those who were of too tender years to protect themselves against the cupidity of employers on the one hand, and of still more grasping, unfeeling, and tyrannical parents on the other. The leaders of the manufacturing interests—the employers of labour—expressed the alarm with which they should view any proposal to restrict or regulate the hours of labour by legislative enactment, and asserted the broad principle of freedom in labour as in everything else. They did not deny the expediency and justice of protecting young children too helpless to protect themselves, but they alleged the danger of interference, on the ground, not only that the labour of children was generally, if not invariably, very light, but that, being devoted to the superintendence of portions of machinery, the whole machinery of factories would be brought to a stand as soon as the labour of the children ceased, and that, consequently, such enactments would, in reality, interfere with and restrict the labour of adults. Against such a result they

protested, in the interests, both of the adult labourer and of the commerce of the country, which would with difficulty, if at all, be able to stem the tide of foreign competition, if any attempt of the kind were made. It is not necessary to mention the names of all those who took a prominent part in these discussions; one name, however, is too interesting, in connection with the subject of the present memoir, not to be cited. The first Sir Robert Peel, the founder of the fortunes of his family, and the father of the cotton manufacture, pronounced himself a decided advocate for the restriction of the hours and periods of labour, as regarded persons of tender years. In his place in parliament, on the factory question, more than thirty years previously, he made a speech on this very subject, in the course of which he urgently "recommended, that children employed in cotton factories should, from nine to sixteen, be under the protection of parliament, and that before nine, they should not be admitted; that they should be employed working eleven hours, which, with one hour and a half for meals, made twelve hours and a half." He also declared himself against night-work in factories. It will be seen, that the second and more celebrated baronet did not share the opinions of his father on this subject.

On the 26th of January, Mr. Fielden obtained leave to bring in a bill to limit the hours of labour of young persons and females in factories, to ten hours a-day. The measure was one which perplexed the government not a little; and, following the course they had adopted on many former occasions of similar difficulty, they resolved upon treating it as an "open question." Accordingly, in its future stages, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and Mr. Milner Gibson voted against it; whilst Lord John Russell, Lord Morpeth, and Sir George Grey, supported it. The support of the latter, however, was but of a qualified and lukewarm character; they all preferred an eleven hours' clause to a ten;

and Lord Morpeth, in committee, moved that the ten-hours' clause be expunged from the bill. The ten-hours' clause, however, was carried by a very large majority—144 to 66.

Sir Robert Peel was amongst the opponents of this measure, and spoke against it on the 3rd of March, on the question for going into committee. In his opening observations, he indulged in a vein of pleasantry (to which he was always very much addicted when the opportunity served) at the expense of the government, whose main supporter he was, but whose division of opinions and perplexities he could not refrain from pointing out,—as foils, no doubt, to the superior clearness of views which he tacitly claimed for his own administration. He said, that, when he was in office, he was ridiculed for having always "three courses" to choose, in every perplexity. "The noble lord at the head of the government seemed to have succeeded to a like position. On the high authority of three of his colleagues, he had three different courses marked out for him on this question. His Irish secretary would have no interference with the hours of labour; the home secretary would go into committee on an eleven-hours' principle; but should the ten-hours' clause be agreed to by the committee, he would then give his cordial support to the third reading of the bill; the chief commissioners of woods and forests would go into committee, but, should the ten-hours' clause be adopted, he would then abandon the home secretary. It was a famous mathematical problem to solve,—at what point a body would be at rest when exposed to the diverse attractions of three other bodies; and it was to be hoped that the prime minister would afford the House the advantage of seeing how he would solve the political difficulty in which he was placed, demonstrating that it was not so hard of solution as the mathematical problem."—Sir Robert Peel proceeded to argue, that the diminution of exports in the last year could not be employed as an

argument against the policy of free-trade, for that, all things considered, the amount of exports was a decisive proof that the commercial policy adopted by parliament was the right one. With regard to the limitation of factory labour, he denounced it as destructive to the welfare, the social improvement, and the intellectual culture of the working classes. If the bill were carried, British capital and British labour would follow British machinery abroad, and the manufacturing greatness of this country would be destroyed.

The anticipations of Sir Robert Peel were not realized; for although the bill passed, the manufacturers, whose interests were so deeply affected, found means to elude it; and adopted a system of relays, by which the machinery was kept going, and the labour of adults was not stopped. By employing one set of children during the hours stipulated in the act, and taking on another set at the expiration of the ten hours, they obeyed the letter, but infringed the spirit, of the law; and showed statesmen of all parties how difficult a practical question they had undertaken to settle.

Another interesting topic of the session was Mr. Watson's bill, (which had been defeated in the previous year,) for the repeal of certain penal enactments against Roman Catholics, still retained on the statute-book.

Upon the motion for the second reading, which took place so early in the session as the 25th of February, Sir Robert Peel made a few observations in favour of some, and in opposition to other parts of the proposal. "The bill," he said, "contemplated a double object. In the first instance, it contemplated the repeal of many of the enactments of the bill of 1829, which relieved the Roman Catholics from almost all political disabilities; and it also proposed to carry into effect certain acts of the previous session, and one of the year 1844, for the abolition of statutes which were in reality obsolete,



which implied doubts of the loyalty of the Roman Catholic community, and which, if put into practical operation, would subject them to severe and disproportionate penalties. So far as the latter object was concerned, the bill would have his cordial support. He had taken an active part in furthering the measures of 1844 and 1846, which had that for their object. He thought it most unwise to continue statutes which were wholly out of consonance and agreement with the spirit of the times, and which inflicted penalties which could not be enforced without revolting the Christian feeling, even of those who did not agree with the Roman Catholics; he thought them discreditable to the statute-book, and therefore he gave his cordial assent to their removal. As to the other object of the bill, he totally dissented from it, for it proposed the repeal of the enactments of the bill of 1829, and he would always contend for the substantial maintenance of that bill. One provision of that bill was, that no Roman Catholic prelate should assume the name or title of a particular see; a second, that no Roman Catholic priest should appear in the streets in the dress and insignia of his order; another, against the introduction of religious orders into the country. The honourable gentleman said that he would not repeal the act which prevented prelates from assuming the titles of sees: and again, he said he was content that no priest should appear in the dress of his order, in processions, because it would be satisfactory to the minds of Protestants. On the same ground, he (Sir R. Peel) would maintain the other provisions of the bill of 1829. Although it might be contended that no compact was then entered into on these points, yet he was confident, that great difficulty would have arisen in removing the disabilities of the Roman Catholics, unless that step had been accompanied by regulations acceptable to the minds of Protestants. It would also operate as a great discouragement to pursuing the same course, if, a few years

after, the legislature, without proper reasons shown, set those regulations aside. With regard to religious orders, he admitted that there might be better regulations adopted, and it was possible that there was too much severity in the penalty of banishment, but he was not prepared to assent to the absolute repeal of the statutes in relation to this subject, without the adoption of some other regulations, or that religious bodies should be established in this country without their being under the control and superintendence of the state. While, therefore, he agreed that the enactments of this bill were in conformity with the statutes of 1844 and 1846, he must accompany that acknowledgment by a declaration, that, to the latter part of the bill, which repealed the securities which accompanied the removal of the disabilities of the Roman Catholics in 1829, he was not prepared to assent, until he heard that some other regulations were to be adopted, and particularly as regarded monastic orders. At the same time, he did not think he was justified in refusing to give his consideration to the bill, because some parts of it did not meet with his unqualified assent."

The second reading of the bill was carried by a majority of 3 in a house of upwards of 200, but was lost in the next stage by a majority of 39.

## CHAPTER VIII.

FOREIGN TOPICS—OCCUPATION OF CRACOW—INTERVENTION  
IN PORTUGAL—PROROGATION AND DISSOLUTION OF PAR-  
LIAMENT.

HAVING referred in detail to the principal questions of domestic policy which occupied the attention of parliament during the session of 1847, it only remains to mention the matters of Foreign Policy, which were brought prominently under the notice of the House. Of these, the most important were, the occupation of the free city of Cracow by Austria, and the intervention of the British government in the affairs of Portugal.

The occupation of the city of Cracow by the Austrian forces, and its incorporation with that empire, in November, 1846, was an act which both astonished and perplexed the other governments of Europe. That it was an act in direct violation of one of the most solemn and dearly purchased treaties in the annals of diplomacy—the treaty of Vienna; a treaty which was supposed to have finally adjusted the limits, and political relations, of all the states of Europe; and that it aimed a fatal blow at that feeling of security and confidence which had, with some comparatively slight exceptions, prevailed in Europe since 1815—there was no one, whether in office or out of office, in any country in Europe, who doubted for a single moment. The only question was, how far it would be possible or expedient to resent this disloyal proceeding, and enforce respect to the sanctity of treaties so insolently disregarded by Austria. Many circumstances tended to render this question one of difficult solution. The remote and isolated

position of the violated territory presented a strong obstacle at the outset ; and when it was added, that the neighbouring powers of Russia and Prussia, who were specially named by the treaty as guarantees of the good faith of Austria, so far from opposing this act of usurpation, were actually parties to the convention under which it was carried into effect ; the other powers, joint-parties with them to the treaty of Vienna, became deprived of all co-operation in that very quarter where it became most requisite, and, if they had resolved upon enforcing by arms the letter and spirit of the violated treaty, they would have had to embroil the whole of Europe. In a word, Great Britain and France would have had to wage war against the centre and east of Europe ; and the spirit of constitutional liberty, and social progress, which was the characteristic, more or less, of the former nations, would have been brought into direct and open conflict with the forces of absolutism. What the immediate political results to the parties in such a conflict might have been, it is needless to speculate upon ; but the experience of a century of war and bloodshed, might satisfy us, that as far as the social condition of the people of the respective nations would have been concerned, such a war could have led to no gain, to no permanent advancement of interests, to no increased security for the future. Indeed, the variety of schemes of international policy resulting from military operations, received a signal illustration in this very case of Cracow. Independently of these considerations, the state of Europe would have rendered a war inexpedient, perhaps impracticable, even if upon other grounds of policy it had been found to be advisable. The distress which everywhere prevailed ; the almost impossibility of raising the requisite funds either in England or France ; the troubled state of Ireland ; the revolution in Portugal, in which our hands were fully occupied ; and though last, by no means the least in these discouragements, the absence of substantial cordiality between



the very governments of France and England, consequent upon the Spanish marriages,—all conspired to render this a moment when Russia and Austria had least occasion to apprehend the possibility of a European war; and there can be little doubt that they gladly availed themselves of the opportunity which was thus presented to them, of carrying out a long-meditated policy. As it was, the French and British governments severally “protested” against the incorporation of Cracow; a proceeding which, though it undoubtedly operated to save the question of right on any future occasion of international negotiation between the parties, has as yet led to no practical result.

But whilst the governments of neither France nor Great Britain took any active step to protect the freedom of Cracow, and to vindicate the authority of treaties, a very strong feeling of discontent and indignation pervaded almost every class of society in both those countries. In the French chambers, in the debate upon the address, a resolution was embodied, and carried unanimously, laying it down broadly, that treaties could not be violated by one party, without releasing all other states from their engagements; and the discussions which took place sufficiently marked the sentiments which the conduct of the Russo-Austrian party had inspired. Shortly after the opening of the session of the British parliament, Mr. Hume gave notice of a distinct motion on the subject, which he brought forward on the 4th of March.

Mr. Hume met the case boldly, and practically, with the following resolutions:

“1. That this House, considering the faithful observance of the General Act of Congress, or treaty of Vienna, of the 9th day of June, 1815, as the basis of the peace and welfare of Europe, views with alarm and indignation the incorporation of the free city of Cracow and of its territory into the empire of Austria, by virtue of a convention entered into at

Vienna, on the 6th day of November, 1846, by Russia, Prussia, and Austria, as a manifest violation of the said treaty.

“That it appears, by returns laid before parliament, that there has already been paid from the British treasury towards the principal and for the interest of the debt called the Russo-Dutch loan, between the years 1816 and 1846, both inclusive, the sum of 40,493,750 florins, equal to £3,374,479 sterling money ; and that the liquidation of the principal and interest of the remaining part of the loan, as stipulated by the act 2d and 3d of William IV., cap. 81, will require further annual payments from the British treasury until the year 1915, amounting to 47,006,260 florins, equal to £3,917,187 sterling money — making then the aggregate payment £7,291,666, and the average for each of the 100 years of £72,916.

“3. That the convention of the 16th day of November, 1831, between his Majesty the King of Great Britain and Ireland and the Emperor of all the Russias, was made to explain the stipulations of the treaty between Great Britain, Russia, and the Netherlands, signed at London on the 19th day of May, 1815, and included in the treaty of Vienna ; and by that convention, it was agreed by Great Britain ‘to secure to Russia the payment of a portion of her old Dutch debt, in consideration of the general arrangements of the Congress of Vienna, to which she had given her adhesion ; arrangements which remain in full force.’

“4. That this House is, therefore, of opinion, that Russia having withdrawn that adhesion, and those arrangements being, through her act, no longer in force, the payments from this country, on account of that debt, should be henceforth suspended.”

These resolutions were not adopted by the House, although they fairly met the merits of the case ; indeed, the ablest

civilians both in England and France had solemnly declared opinions strictly in accordance with them. Amongst these was Dr. Addams, who, in an elaborate statement published at this time, declared his deliberate conviction that "the violation of the conditions of the treaty of Vienna by Russia, distinctly relieved England from all further payment on account of the Russo-Dutch loan;" adding, that "if Great Britain made any further payments, it must be on political considerations only (as to which he gave no opinion) and not by any means as obliged thereto by the convention."

We notice these opinions before referring to the debate on Mr. Hume's motion, because they throw a light upon the abstract principles involved, and also suggest the considerations of expediency which might have influenced the conduct of ministers. On the abstract merits of the case, there was scarcely a difference of opinion. In the course of a three nights' debate, all parties concurred in denouncing, as a gross violation of national faith, the act of the three powers. There was but one exception to this unanimity, which was the speech of Lord G. Bentinck. His lordship's arguments amounted to this, that Austria had a right to resume possession of Cracow whenever she found it advisable for her own safety or interests to do so. His lordship, after passing a high panegyric upon the humane, enlightened, and paternal governments of Russia, Prussia, and Austria, "thanked them, that their too long forbearance (with regard to Cracow) had at length given way to the energy of decision, and that they had smothered this den of revolutionists, who threatened to keep Europe continually in hot-water, whilst they were ruining their own country, and disturbing the peace of their neighbours."

Lord John Russell, speaking the sentiments of the government, stated, that he concurred in the view of Mr. Hume, that the three powers were not justified by the treaty of

Vienna in deciding by themselves the question, whether the free state of Cracow should be maintained or not. Neither could he think, whilst those arrangements, which placed the duchy of Warsaw under the power of Russia, and which formed the subject of much discussion at Vienna, and of a long correspondence between the Emperor of Russia and the British minister, formed still the principal part of the treaty of Vienna, that the arrangement which left Cracow free and independent, was an inconsiderable or insignificant part of it. When complaints were made that Cracow was a focus of insurrections against the three powers, those complaints should have been stated to England and France, and England and France should have been invited to a conference to put an end to a state of things which the complainants deemed inconsistent with their own safety. Both, then, on the grounds of the treaty of Vienna, and on the insufficient grounds stated by Prince Metternich for the violent seizure and extinction of Cracow as a free and independent state, he was of opinion that the three courts had been guilty of a violation of the treaty of Vienna, and her Majesty's government had directed Lord Palmerston to protest against it to them all, individually and collectively."

So far all were agreed ; but when it came to the course of interference proposed to the House to adopt, the premier could not concur in it ; and declared, that Mr. Hume in proposing it, "wished the House in some degree to usurp the functions of the crown." His lordship argued, that "when a treaty was made with a foreign power, the minister of the crown asked the House for its concurrence ; but when it was violated, it was not the practice of the House to affirm a resolution which was merely declaratory of its opinion on that subject." He added, that "while it was incumbent on the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to declare his sense of the violation of a treaty, (which he had done in this case by



protesting against it,) it was not advisable that the House of Commons should affirm resolutions condemnatory of the conduct of a foreign power, unless it was prepared to follow up that step by some act of an executive character." It is sufficient simply to state these positions of Lord John Russell, without arguing them; merely observing with respect to the last observation, that the resolutions did propose to follow up the condemnation of a foreign power, by "an act of an executive character," which, though it did not fully meet the merits of the case, was quite justifiable, *per se*, as far as it went. With respect to this very step, however, the noble lord stated, that he had been informed by "the highest legal authorities," that "according to the *spirit* of the convention, the interest on the loan ought to be paid,"—that "at best there was but a doubtful point in our favour, which we might take advantage of if we wished to quibble, but which we ought not to take in a *court of conscience* between two nations;" and that "we should lower our position in Europe, if we were to reduce this question to a mere question of pounds-shillings-and-pence." Upon all these grounds, Lord John Russell stated that he should meet the resolutions, if persisted in, by moving the "previous question."

In the course of the debate which followed, Sir Robert Peel made a short speech, in which he supported the government in their policy. He said:—

"If I thought that the views of the honourable member who proposed these resolutions were just or right, I should at once admit that he had proposed a series of consistent resolutions. If we are justified in relieving ourselves from the obligations which the conventions of 1815 and 1831 imposed upon us, of taking upon ourselves the payment of a portion of the debt contracted towards Russia by the subjects of Holland, I think the honourable member has pursued a parliamentary and consistent course in prefacing practical

resolutions by an enunciation of the motives on which those resolutions are founded. And if I agreed in the conclusions to which he has come in his fourth resolution, I should have no great difficulty in affirming a proposition, if not identical in form with those he has proposed, at least corresponding in substance. But I have the greatest doubt as to the right of this country to relieve itself from the obligations contracted by the conventions of 1815 and 1831; and if there be any question as to the right, I greatly doubt the policy of our pointing out that doubt, and deciding it in our own favour. On these grounds I differ from the practical conclusion to which the honourable member has come. I find that in 1815 we assumed these obligations in respect to pecuniary matters on two grounds. First, on account of the exertions which had been made by the powers who were parties to the treaty of Saumur, in releasing Belgium from France, and annexing it to Holland; but secondly, and most materially, as affecting the honour of England, because, on the conclusion of the peace with Holland, we reserved to ourselves those valuable possessions of Holland, the Cape of Good Hope, Demerara, Essequibo, and Berbice. I think Lord Castlereagh's letter is almost decisive on this point. He, who was so conversant with these transactions, distinctly says: 'It appears to me impossible, after the principle laid down in our negotiations with Holland, that Great Britain should retain the Cape, Demerara, Essequibo, and Berbice, that we could remain without some such charge, either to increase funds, or as applicable to fortifications.' We not only, therefore, contracted a pecuniary obligation for exertions made in a common cause, but it is also manifest that we received an equivalent for our pecuniary payment, and, what is more, at the general congress we reserved, in absolute cession, to be held in perpetuity, in consideration of our payment of the Russo-Dutch loan, the valuable colony to which

I have before alluded. But what further does the treaty say? There is an express stipulation that the pecuniary obligation shall endure; that the payment of half the interest of the Russo-Dutch loan shall continue even in the event of war between the contracting powers. Well, then, supposing the honourable member for Montrose to be correct, supposing there to have been a violation of the treaty of Vienna by Russia, even so flagrant as to justify our going to war, I contend that, even after a declaration of war, you are bound to continue this payment.

“It seems odd then, that if we choose to remain at peace, we should attempt to violate conditions held binding even in case of war. For these reasons I doubt the right of England to relieve herself from this obligation. Certainly it is possible, as the noble lord has observed, that a court of law might give judgment in our favour; but construing the matter equitably, as to the intentions of the parties at the time when the treaty was concluded, I deny that, morally or equitably, we have a right to relieve ourselves from this obligation. And if we have not, I protest at any time, but more particularly at the present, against seeking any pecuniary advantage, and thus disentitling us to hold the language we wish to hold on this important question. I am the more anxious that we should equitably and honourably fulfil our engagements, because I differ from the language used by the minister of France as to the result of these transactions. M. Guizot says in his protest: ‘No power can free itself from this treaty without at the same time freeing others. France has not given the example of such attempts on the policy of conservatism and peace; France has not forgotten the painful sacrifices forced on her in 1815, and must rejoice at the opportunity now afforded to consult nothing but a provident estimate of her own interest.’ I protest against the conduct of the three powers, and also

against the language held by the minister of France. I cannot admit that either this country or France is entitled to consult nothing but a provident estimate of its own interest. I totally deny that the failure of other parties justifies us, morally or legally, in violating a treaty. And it is because I believe that in the present state of Europe the strict and honourable adherence to treaties is the best foundation of peace, and affords the best prospect of solving the difficulties presented by the aspect of affairs; it is because I differ from the minister of France as to his construing of this treaty; because I differ from him as to our right to relieve ourselves from an obligation by following the example against which he protests; it is on these accounts, that I feel doubly anxious, that if such language be held by other powers, we should not participate in it, and that, if we stand alone, we shall stand alone an honourable example in the face of Europe of a strict and honourable adherence to our obligations. On these grounds, on grounds of equity and high policy, on grounds connected with the name and honour of England, I cannot concur with the honourable member in taking the first, or any step, towards relieving ourselves from this debt. I find that there are some honourable members who, concurring with me as to the continued obligation of the convention, still are prepared, while dissenting from the fourth resolution, to concur in the first. Now, as I said before, I think the resolutions are consistent, providing that the practical conclusion is correct; but if the conclusion be not correct, then the three first resolutions stand without any foundation. The honourable member invites us to declare that we view the conduct of the three powers with alarm and indignation. I do not think, as we are not prepared to take any practical step, that we should be justified in coming to such a preliminary resolution. After a solemn declaration that we viewed the conduct of the three powers with alarm and indignation, what does



the honourable member propose that we should do? I cannot say that I think that, for a popular assembly, such as the representative body of England, it would be dignified, after a resolution of that nature, to remain unprepared to follow it up with some practical step. The honourable member says that he deprecates war, and is not prepared to follow up his resolutions with any practical step. I think that the noble lord at the head of the government is fully justified in the distinction he has drawn between the executive government and a popular assembly. The crown has entered its protest against the annihilation of Cracow as a free state. It was the duty of the crown, on the part of this empire, to make such representation. The crown is the legitimate channel through which should be conveyed the opinion of the country, but I confess I very much doubt, if we are not prepared to take some practical step, the policy of the House of Commons agreeing to these resolutions. I cannot consent, therefore, to vote for them, when we are not prepared to follow them up by some practical proceeding. Leaving, therefore, this question in the hands of the crown, on whose part the prime minister has entered his protest, leaving it on the responsibility of the executive government, I must dissent from the honourable member's conclusion, and therefore must negative his resolutions. At the same time I feel it to be my duty to accompany that expression of my opinion on these particular points with the distinct declaration, that I adhere to the conviction I expressed on the first day of the session, that the act of the three powers in extinguishing the independence of Cracow, in annihilating its existence as a free state, is as opposed to the stipulations of the treaty of Vienna, as it is to the maintenance of public confidence in treaties. I repeat this opinion with great reluctance, because, while I express it, I retain my opinion also, that it is of the utmost importance for us to maintain friendly relations with these

three great powers. I, for one, have viewed with the utmost satisfaction that amicable understanding which for some years past has prevailed between this country and France, as fraught with the good of both countries, as eminently tending to promote civilization, and as calculated to preserve tranquillity throughout Europe. It was with deep pain, therefore, that I witnessed the temporary interruption of that good understanding, in consequence of the Spanish marriages; but while I rejoiced at our cultivating these friendly relations with France, I never wished to cultivate them in any way that should impair our maintenance also of friendly relations with the three powers. I never desired to have any such secret understanding with France as should afford cause of jealousy to the three powers, with whom for many years we have maintained relations honourable to all parties, and most beneficial to Europe at large. My own experience teaches me, that our friendly relations with these three powers have been entirely justified by their conduct towards us—by the honourable confidence which they have, up to this point, exhibited towards us. It is, therefore, with deep regret I am bound to state, that I cannot concur in the opinion which the noble lord who spoke just before me has expressed, to the effect that the three powers are entitled to a public acknowledgment of thanks on the part of this country. I cannot find in the elaborate arguments of Prince Metternich any justification of the course which the three powers have pursued. I take this general treaty of Vienna: I am told that the liberty which was given to Cracow, was given it by some separate and independent act to which England was not a party; that the three powers consented to give to Cracow an independence which it did not possess before, and that England and France merely stood by, in the humble capacity of registering powers, to put their names as witnesses to a consent, but having no

authority conferred on them to interfere, in the event of any violation of it. Now the 32d article of the treaty of Paris, of May, 1814, under which the congress of Vienna was held, set forth, that the congress of Vienna should be held for the purpose of collecting into one general act all the various negotiations, engagements, conventions, and stipulations of the various contracting powers, and giving a general sanction to them, and a general uniformity to all regulations of superior and permanent interest. The 6th article of the general treaty of Vienna sets forth, that the town of Cracow is declared to be a free, independent, and strictly neutral state, under the protection of Austria, Prussia, and Russia. This is one of the distinct and leading articles of the treaty, and from its position, we may fairly regard it as one of those articles of superior and permanent interest, which were to be specifically united in one general act. To this general treaty we find the name of the minister of England attached, and I cannot understand how it should be contended that three of the contracting powers have a right to abrogate this 6th article, and incorporate Cracow with Austria, without communicating with the other parties to the treaty. I can well conceive that Cracow may have broken its particular engagements; and I at once admit that Cracow has no right whatever to disturb the peace of the countries around it. I can imagine that if Cracow be made the focus of insurrections, by which the peace of the three powers is affected, the result may become so intolerable as to justify the three powers in looking to some decisive measure as the only remedy for the evil; but I contend that no such step should have been taken without a previous understanding having been come to with the other powers. The three powers, however, have had recourse to no such preliminary sanction on the part of France and England; but have sacrificed the independence of Cracow on grounds even more dangerous in their ten-

deney than the act itself. The claim to deal with the convention regarding Cracow as a separate convention, without reference to all the parties by whose common ratification the treaty of Vienna was confirmed, is one which I consider most perilous to the peace of Europe, in its tendency to shake the public opinion of Europe as to the validity of great European engagements. Again, it is urged that Cracow is only a geographical atom: very true; and on that very account do I consider that the engagements respecting it should be most religiously adhered to, that not one stipulation regarding it, made by the five powers, should be even modified without the consent of the five powers. Hamburgh is only a geographical atom, Frankfort is only a geographical atom, yet will it be said that because they are only atoms geographically, they are to be sacrificed to the next strong power which shall choose to assail them, or either of them? As in this country there would be far more danger, constitutionally, in an attack upon the freedom of a pauper than on that of a peer; so, in Continental Europe, while I do not fear that Austria will attack Russia, or Wurtemberg or Bavaria Prussia, I do look with apprehension at the attack of a great state upon a small city, or a small state, on the plea that the latter is only a geographical atom. With reference to this country in the matter, I must say, that, looking back to the position which she has maintained since the commencement of the revolutionary war, at the sacrifices she has made, at the disinterested restitutions she made upon the settlement of the affairs of Europe, at the subsidies she paid, at the manner in which she alone stood the brunt of the stupendous efforts of Napoleon, I must say, that I think the treatment to which she has been subjected in this matter of Cracow has been wholly unmerited on her part. This was the feeling which evidently prevailed with the Prussian minister. As to the policy of the act itself, I think it very



questionable. It is a shock to the public feeling of Europe. That public feeling is an intelligent feeling. It has no desire to interfere with the independent action of other states. The French revolution has read us a useful lesson. It has taught us the policy of early reforms—of relinquishing unjust exemptions, and special privileges held by particular classes. It has, on the other hand, calmed the wild aspirations after impossibilities, and taught us to distrust the magnificent promises either of demagogues or of sincere enthusiasts. But there did, at the same time, pervade the intelligent and reflecting classes of the community a sincere desire to witness the progress of sober, well-considered, and rational reforms; and there was a feeling of sympathy to be formed for such a course of proceeding, with one from whom liberal measures were not generally expected—from him who presided over the spiritual concerns of a great state. With respect to Craew, if the power of these three states had been absolute and complete—if Craew had not been placed in some respect under the guaranty of other powers, an unwillingness to interfere with the free action of independent authorities would, he believed, have induced that intelligent opinion to which he referred to remain quiescent, and not interfere with the free discretion of those powers, which were entitled to exercise an absolute authority. But it was felt, that by the treaty of Vienna there was a public assurance given—that the city of Craew should form an example of free institutions and independence. The noble lord said, that the nationality of Poland was never dreamed of by those concerned in that treaty. He begged to remind the noble lord, that in the correspondence of Lord Castlereagh, he would find a distinct suggestion to the Emperor of Russia that his moral duties compelled him to ameliorate the condition of his Polish subjects, and that that object was to be effected by restoring to Poland her rights as an independent





Painted by Sir D. Lawrence P. R. A.

Engraved by F. Ad. G.

THE RT HON<sup>BLE</sup> ROBERT STEWART, MARQUESS OF LONDONDERRY

*Londonderry*

nation. Lord Castlereagh, moreover, did convey to the Emperor of Russia, on the part of Austria and Prussia, that those powers would readily acquiesce in such an establishment. The noble lord would find, that in the first article of the treaty of Vienna, it was distinctly declared, that the Poles, who are respective subjects of Russia, Austria, and Prussia, shall obtain a representation and national institutions regulated according to the degree of political consideration that each of the governments to which they belong shall judge expedient and proper to grant them. Whether or no the conduct of the Poles in 1831 justified the withholding of those institutions, was quite another matter. What he contended was, that by the treaty of Vienna hopes were held out, that there would be given to Cracow, not only a free government, but with respect to other Poles, subjects of Austria, Prussia, and Russia, that there would be given that degree of nationality and separate existence which was implied by representative assemblies and national institutions. Again he regretted the course which had been adopted; and again he must assert, that he could not find any sufficient vindication for it, and that the arguments by which it was attempted to justify it were at least as dangerous as the course itself. He approved of the protest which had been entered into by the noble lord opposite. He thought that that noble lord had acted wisely in determining, in the relation in which we stood to France, to enter the protest separately and independently upon the part of this country—and as he (Sir R. Peel) concurred in the tenor of it, he felt it his duty to give to the government such support, small as it might be, as the expression of his opinion in favour of the course they had pursued, could give them.”

Sir Robert Peel seems to have thought that by the terms of the convention we were bound to continue the payment of the Russo-Dutch loan, even in case of being at war with



Russia. He exclaimed triumphantly, that "it seemed odd, if we chose to remain at peace, that we should attempt to violate conditions held binding even in case of war." Upon this, it is only necessary to observe, that the whole question at issue was, whether the "conditions" were binding at all upon us, Russia having broken her part of the contract. Sir Robert Peel and his party did not, however, see the matter in this light; and eventually Mr. Hume withdrew his resolutions, out of deference to the wishes of government, contenting himself with finding so unanimous an expression of opinion in favour of their principle throughout the House. With this discussion may be said to have ended the validity of the treaty of Vienna. Henceforth it was proclaimed to the world, that the treaty was only binding as long as it was convenient to the contracting parties to respect it.

The other great foreign question which engaged the attention of parliament, was that of the affairs of Portugal, and particularly of the policy of our interference at a late stage of the civil war, after having declared at the onset of it, and for nearly six months of its continuance, that we should adhere to a strictly neutral policy. The subject, which was one of as deep importance not only to this country individually, but to the international relations of Europe generally, as the violation of the treaty of Vienna by Austria, Russia, and Prussia, was brought before the House of Commons by Mr. Hume on the 11th, and before the House of Lords by Lord Stanley on the 15th of June.

A solemn declaration had been made by Lord Palmerston of the principle of non-intervention, and reiterated by him so recently as the 5th of April, in a despatch, in which he stated, that "Don Miguel was not in Portugal; and that there had been no insurrection worthy of account in his name, and in support of his pretensions to the crown; that the civil war which had unhappily for nearly six months afflicted

Portugal, had not sprung from the pretensions of Don Miguel, nor had it originated with his partisans, but that it arose from very different causes, and among a very different political party; that the contest did not turn upon the question who should be sovereign of Portugal, but upon the question who should be the responsible ministers of the crown in Portugal, and by what principles of administration the country should be governed. These questions," added Lord Palmerston, "were widely different from questions of dynasty and succession. These questions were purely domestic in their bearing, and with them foreign powers, except in very extreme cases, could not be entitled to interfere."

Subsequently to the 5th of April, however, the British government departed from the sound and correct policy herein laid down, and which had hitherto marked their conduct. What were the grounds upon which this altered policy was taken, what were the influences, personal or other, which impelled the government to adopt it, we have at present no certain means of judging, as it will appear from the sequel, that the debate in the House of Commons was brought to an abrupt termination, the House being counted out, before Lord Palmerston had taken an opportunity of speaking. To those, however, who were in the slightest degree initiated into the secret springs of diplomacy, there was little mystery in the matter. It was necessary to maintain, at all costs, Donna Maria da Gloria, and her husband king Ferdinand of Saxe-Coburg, upon the throne of Portugal. A neutral course of policy between the contending parties, was permitted only as long as the queen and her ministers had, or pretended to have, a chance of obtaining the day; when their case became hopeless, and the success of the liberal party was certain and imminent; then, and not till then, the government of this country, which had not interfered between the Queen and her victims, Bomfim and others, rudely interfered; thus rendering

abortive a protracted struggle of six months, and stultifying a policy of equal duration. The alleged reason for adopting this new line of conduct was the threatened intervention of France and Spain, which it was the interest of Great Britain to prevent.

The speech of Lord Stanley was one of the ablest ever delivered by that statesman; and, as it placed the case in a clearer and more striking light than the speech of Mr. Hume, and was as comprehensive in fact, as it was lucid in argument, we select it in preference. His lordship laid down the broad principle—a principle declared by every authority on the laws of nations—that intervention in the internal affairs of any independent state could not be justified under any circumstances,—whether at the invitation and in support of the crown or its ministers, or of the people who might be in a state of insurrection. “This principle,” he said, “had always been strictly adhered to by this country. Even in 1792, when the French revolution was at its height, when the sovereign of France was no longer exercising his royal functions, but was a prisoner in the hands of his revolted subjects, and when this country had withdrawn its ambassador, the king, in the speech from the throne, stated, ‘I have carefully observed a strict neutrality in the present war on the continent, and have uniformly abstained from any interference with respect to the internal affairs of France.’ After the judicial murder of Louis XVI., it was from France as against England, and not from England against France, that there came a declaration of war.” He cited, also, the authority of later statesmen—of Mr. Canning, of Earl Grey, and of Lord Palmerston himself, for this important principle. The last-named minister, in a speech on the affairs of Portugal, in the year 1829, clearly asserted the principle, and defined its precise limits and intention. His lordship, after recapitulating some of the incidents of the contest, commented

severely upon the pretensions to arbitrary authority assumed by the Queen's party, the abolition of trial by jury, and the cruel treatment of Count Bomfim and his companions, who, having surrendered as prisoners of war, were, contrary to all the usages of war, sent out, under circumstances of great inhumanity, as prisoners to Angola. He commented also upon the conduct of Colonel Wylde, who, though he had been sent out by the British government to "mediate" between the parties, had evinced, from the commencement and throughout his proceedings, a decided and avowed feeling of partisanship for the Queen's party. The gist of the case, however, as concerned the conduct of the British government, was their interference by an armed force. Upon this part of the case, Lord Stanley remarked :—

" He must say, he was at a loss to understand upon what possible ground the noble lord at the head of foreign affairs could have shifted his position, and concluded, that what was right on April 4th was wrong upon the 5th. Up to the 5th of April, the government had acted on the principle of non-intervention : subsequent to that day, matters took a different turn with them, and they made the question one to be decided by an armed interference. Let their lordships only consider the sort of offer they made to the junta : ' Here,' they said, ' are the terms which we prescribe : accept them at once—without hesitation, without mitigation, with no alteration, with no condition ; if you refuse them, we, your old ally and protector, England, will join our forces with those of France and Spain, and compel you to act according to our dictates !' Was this fair or equitable ? At the very time, be it remembered, that we were taking this step, the forces of the junta were in possession of almost the whole country. Here was a letter from Sir Hamilton Seymour to Lord Palmerston, dated April 9, detailing some particulars as to the state of Portugal :—



“ ‘ This afternoon I received a visit from Don Manoel de Portugal and Count Trojal, who came to represent to me the desperate condition of the Queen’s cause, and the danger which was to be apprehended, not only to the security of the town, but to that of her most faithful majesty, and her august family.’ He then proceeded to detail some particulars, and added : ‘ This was the least gloomy part of the statement. If the prospects in the provinces were bad, those in the capital itself were worse.’

“ He went on to give accounts of the desperate condition to which the Queen’s government were reduced. Very properly he applied for, and obtained the support of, one of her Majesty’s ships of war, to provide for the safety of the crown. Colonel Wylde also reported, from the seat of war, that the proceedings of the junta were most alarming, and that, wherever the Queen’s forces presented themselves, they found the country deserted, and were met by every symptom of the disgust in which they were held by the entire population. It was under these circumstances that England had interfered; it was at such a time that, in conjunction with Spain and France, they had sanctioned an invasion of the soil of Portugal. Let them, then, tell him now, upon what plea it was they defended such an interference on the part of a nation which had hitherto been the protectress of liberty wherever she was to be found? What that plea would be, he found it difficult satisfactorily to anticipate. A whisper had, indeed, reached him, of an argument held in some other place, such as he hoped no British minister would openly venture in that House to advance. It had been said, as he was told, that England interfered, because, if England had not interfered, other nations would have done so. Why, if other nations had threatened to interfere, her Majesty’s government would surely have been bound, as ministers of the crown and conservators of treaties, to prohibit such interference,

and resist it to the last. But, indeed, he did not think there were any serious grounds of apprehension on the score of this threatened interference of France and Spain; and he supported his view, in regard to France by a reference to the official despatches of the French government. As to Spain, we had but to hold up a little finger, and warn Spain, that the first soldier that crossed her frontier would be considered a signal for war with England."

But apart from the considerations advanced by Lord Stanley, it might be clearly laid down, that a threatened act of wrong by other nations can be no valid excuse for our forestalling them in a similar line of policy.

The Marquis of Lansdowne defended the conduct of government. He boldly stated, that "our proceedings had been in conformity with sound policy, which allowed and prescribed to us interference in the affairs of the Peninsula, and which always pointed out Portugal as the country in which Great Britain had the best right to exercise her influence, and had exercised it most beneficially for that country." After a short debate, in which the Duke of Wellington justified the interference of government on grounds of expediency, Lord Stanley's resolution was supported by 47 votes against 66, leaving a majority of 19 for ministers.

Of the importance to this country of maintaining our friendly position in Portugal, there is no one who has studied the history of our connexion with that country for the last five hundred years, and particularly within the last century, who can entertain a doubt. Lisbon is the only port, upon the whole of the western sea-board of Europe, where our fleets, military or commercial, command a position in case of need; and it was from this point that our successful military operations in the Peninsular war were commenced. But the question to consider is, whether we could not have retained

this position more effectually, and more upon a cordial footing, than we have done, by abstaining from armed intervention in the dispute between Queen Donna Maria and her subjects? There is good reason to believe, that, had the junta been left to carry out their operations, they would have been successful, and that the result of that success, without at all endangering the royal dynasty in that country, would only have resulted in the freeing of her majesty from the evil council with which she was surrounded. The moral effect of such a consummation would have been much more complete and satisfactory than any which could be obtained by foreign intervention—a proceeding equally degrading to both parties; and, guided by our good offices, it might have put the contending parties upon a footing of a better and more permanent understanding than afterwards appeared to exist as the result of our exertions.

It remains, however, to take some notice of the debate upon this subject, which took place in the Lower House of parliament. On the adjourned debate upon Mr. Hume's motion condemning the policy of ministers, Mr. Duneombe moved an amendment, to the effect, "That Great Britain having become a party to foreign armed interference in Portugal, to terminate the civil war that unhappily prevails in that kingdom, it was the opinion of the House, that, on tranquillity being restored, it would become the duty of the British government to take measures for securing to the people of Portugal the full enjoyment of their constitutional rights and privileges."

Nothing could more strongly illustrate the dilemma in which the government found themselves placed, in reference to this question, than the eagerness with which Mr. Macaulay—who made the only speech of any importance on the ministerial side, and one in itself of considerable ability—seized upon this amendment as a possible means of evading the great consti-

tutional question at issue. He commenced by saying, that—

“He had heard with great pleasure the amendment which had just been moved by his honourable friend, who had taken a correct view of the principles which had guided, and would continue to guide, her Majesty’s government. He had also observed with pleasure that his honourable friend and others, who were at first disposed to censure the course adopted by the government, had, upon an examination of the unfortunate circumstances which had compelled them to depart from the general rule, which prescribed an abstinence from interference in the internal affairs of foreign nations, seen sufficient reason in those circumstances to justify that departure. He was not surprised that such a feeling should have at first existed ; for there was no doubt that the minister who deviated from the sound general rule of non-interference, was bound to make out a case for interference, to the satisfaction of the country. There could be no doubt—and this was part of their case—that the crown of Portugal had long been surrounded by evil councillors ; that most violent and unconstitutional measures had been adopted ; that acts, both cruel and disgraceful had been committed ; and that altogether, circumstances had occurred to justify the people of Portugal in receiving with distrust any assurance on the part of the crown. It was not surprising, then, that the interference of this country should be viewed with jealousy, when the object of it seemed to be to rescue that government, which was marked by so many faults, from peril. Admitting all this, he was fully convinced that the government of this country had chosen the less of two evils ; for a choice of evils was all that could be expected from such a state of things. Considering that Portugal was distracted by civil war, and that other powers had a strong inclination to interfere, he held it to be clear that no course whatever, absolutely exempt from incon-



venience and risk, was open to the British government. He maintained, also, that no honourable member's argument against that course was sound, unless he himself pointed out another line of conduct, and advanced good reasons for believing that it would be less hazardous. Of the course that had been taken they knew and felt all the evils, but they did not feel the evils of the course which had not been taken. This being so, he thought the government was fairly entitled to call upon every honourable member to lay before the House, not merely a statement of those inconveniences which were inseparable from interference, but the plan of policy which should distinctly avoid those inconveniences without leaving still greater. No such measure had yet been submitted to the House; and he doubted if it was in any honourable gentleman's power to devise such a plan of policy. In fact, he saw in every other course than that which her Majesty's government had followed, inconveniences greater than attended it; and his argument rested upon the peculiar relations that existed between England and Portugal."

Upon this, as upon other occasions, Sir Robert Peel came to the rescue of the government, and gave the support of his voice in approval of the course of policy which they had adopted, under circumstances, certainly, of peculiar difficulty. His speech, however, though one of considerable length, presents few passages of interest to the historian, it was simply a speech *d'occasion*, a speech of apology rather than argument, and the weight of which was to be attributed more to the name and character of the speaker, than the materials of which it was composed. In the opening portion of it, he said:—

"I am called on to affirm that the armed interference of the government between political parties in Portugal is unwarrantable in principle, and likely to lead to serious and mischievous consequences. The affirmation of such a pro-

position would be a vote of censure, if not direct, implied, upon the government, and its consequence would also be practically a reversal of the policy on which the government has entered; nay more, it might possibly embarrass the conduct of that policy, and, with the expressed opinion of the House adverse to it, have the effect of paralyzing the hands of those who are to carry it out. The question then is, whether, with a due regard to justice and public policy, I am justified in passing a vote of censure on the government, which would act as a retraction of the policy on which they are actually engaged. I am about to exercise a privilege which is most agreeable to me. I am about to give an opinion, without the necessity for that circumspection and reserve which is observed by a member of an administration or the leader of a party. I am about to state the opinion which I have individually formed. I speak no man's opinions, and the vote I shall give will be founded only on the honest opinion which I have adopted, on a view of the whole matter, without reference to extrinsic motives, but only to those which are founded on my conscientious judgment. In the first place, what do I infer, from the papers which are laid before us, are the motives and objects of the government—speaking of them as separate from their acts? I have read those papers; and if I believed, that, in their departure from the principle of non-intervention, it was the object of the government to range themselves on the side of despotism, or to crush the liberties of Portugal, I would cordially have concurred in a vote of censure upon them. But, after reading those papers, I do acquit the government of any intention other than to support the ancient monarchy of Portugal, and to unite with it a guaranty for the constitutional liberty of the people.”

In reference to the actual position of affairs at the time of our altered policy, he said:—

“In reviewing the acts of the government, the recollection of the 5th of April, as a day of the utmost importance, must not be lost sight of. Up to that day we had limited ourselves to friendly advice, and to remonstrances; and up to that day few persons would be disposed to censure the government for any act they had done, or any advice they had given. At the same time, in reviewing the acts of any government, I should attach considerable weight to the motives and intentions by which the acts were directed; and the question is, whether we, on the 5th of April,—when it was clear that her Majesty’s government departed from its course, and then undertook, not merely to give advice, but to make proposals which, in certain contingencies, might involve the possible necessity of an armed intervention,—had given a sufficient indication of the act, apart from the motives which induced it. We are now sitting as judges of the past, and we have a great advantage over those who had to make a decision which should provide against very complicated and uncertain contingencies. That which was then obscure, is now as light as day. It is now very easy to say that a mistake has been committed, but it ought not to be forgotten that the individual who now had a knowledge of all that has taken place, is in a very different position from him who had to decide in the dark, under uncertain and difficult circumstances. With this feeling, therefore, I will place myself, in considering the question, in the situation and position of her Majesty’s government, who, on receiving a communication from the Portuguese government, had to decide upon the course to be pursued; and I must say I cannot conceive a position more embarrassing, or a decision more difficult. On the one hand, there was the government of a nation which had done acts that merited disapprobation; and there was every argument against a forcible intervention in a domestic quarrel; and there was also the danger that by such inter-

vention this country might set a precedent for other and future interventions, from which serious embarrassment might arise. These are considerations which were material to be weighed, for no man feels a stronger objection than I do to wanton intervention. On the other hand, it became the government of the country, responsible as it is for the administration of affairs, to consider also what course it was fitting to pursue with reference to the general interests of humanity, and the restoration of domestic peace in a country, in the internal quietude of which we are entitled to take a deep interest. Was there any prospect of an early termination of the struggles which were carried on in Portugal?—were not parties so equally balanced, that the conflict which existed on the 1st of April last, had been continued from the 7th of October preceding?—was there not a probability that, if we had stood aloof, and said to the Portuguese nation, ‘You must fight the matter out yourselves,’ we should have witnessed a still more terrible struggle, by which the industry of that country would have been impeded, her commerce crippled, her cultivation of the soil neglected, and permanent discord established among the members of the same nation—I might almost say of the same family—without the superiority of either one party or the other, in the strife, being decided?”

This view of the extremely distressed state of the country, he supported by reference to a variety of official despatches, the general tenor of which, it must be admitted, showed that the position of the Queen’s cause was much more desperate than that of the junta; indeed, that the government of the Queen, and the crown itself, were in imminent peril. In short, that a crisis was at hand, which, in ordinary course, would inevitably have brought the war to a termination, was admitted in one of these very despatches which Sir Robert quoted—that of Sir Hamilton Seymour. After reading the despatch, Sir Robert Peel continued:—



“ But supposing the Queen had been victorious in the contemplated struggle, where was the guarantee for the success of the cause of constitutional liberty? It could not be denied that the issue was doubtful. I find in these documents very strong proofs that intestine dissensions prevailed amongst the junta of Oporto; and therefore, with the probability that the cause of the Queen would have triumphed, where was the security or guaranty that this triumph would have been conducted with moderation and forbearance? My belief is, that there would have been little security either for a return to constitutional liberty, or for the exhibition of decent forbearance and generosity. Looking at all these facts, I cannot in justice join in the condemnation of her Majesty’s government, who, balancing these conflicting considerations, had resolved that, upon the whole, it was best to make proposals, which, if rejected, must have led to the necessity of force being employed. With regard to France and Spain, I have already said, that they have shown confidence in the English government, and I believe that the French government was desirous for the settlement of the unfortunate differences which prevailed in Portugal, but that they never desired to make a separate intervention. I do not believe the prime minister of Louis Philippe would advise a wanton or unnecessary intervention in the affairs of another state; but I find that the French minister, disposed as he was to show confidence in this country, had distinctly declared that ‘ the Portuguese government was entitled to ask the aid of the Spanish government.’ On the three grounds, that of the probability of the conflict in Portugal being long continued—that it was for the interest of humanity that we should interfere—and lastly, that if we had not, there was a great probability that France and Spain would have done so; I again say, that I cannot consent to visit with condemnation those who, in the midst of such difficulties,

decided upon British intervention. It is on these grounds that I shall give my vote against the motion of the honourable member for Montrose. I think it inconsistent with justice to visit the government with a censure that would disentitle them to the confidence of the House."

He then proceeded to point out a practical difficulty which he imagined would result from the adoption of the motion. It would, however, be a bar to all declarations of opinion by parliament, on the past policy of government, if the passing of a vote of censure entailed the necessity for an undoing of all that had been done, and a reinstatement of affairs in precisely the same position they were before the government had interfered. Yet this difficulty Sir Robert Peel deliberately propounded to the House of Commons on this occasion:—

"But there still remains to be considered the more important question of the public policy of the course which had been taken. Would the House, in the very midst of the carrying into execution the policy of the government, say that this policy must be abandoned, or, by a vote of censure, palsy the hands by which it was to be brought into operation? Should this motion be adopted, what will be the consequence to the public policy of this country? Will you release Das Antas and his forces, or continue them as prisoners of war? This House will surely not say to the government—'You are bound by our vote; and we leave you to get out of the difficulty as you may.' What course will you adopt? Will you replace Das Antas and his 2,500 men on board the British steamers, and take them back to Oporto, and say to them—'Gentlemen, we were quite wrong in bringing you away from your position; it is right that we should make you some compensation for this; and we therefore replace you exactly in the position which you occupied. Any damage which we have done to you, or

the prospects of your cause, we are willing to repair; we therefore restore you to Oporto, and leave you to fight it out with Saldanha.' It will not be enough to release Das Antas and his troops, and leave them in Lisbon. Will you, then, continue them as British prisoners of war? What course is the executive to take in the midst of these proceedings? It might be necessary to send out instructions, to-morrow night, in reference to some despatch that might be received; and if the government is not to act upon the distinct resolution of the House of Commons, what is its motive for coming to any resolution at all? The Minister of Foreign Affairs might very naturally say, 'I am bound by the vote of the House of Commons to undo all that I have done; I must creep out of the difficulty as I best can, though it may not be in a very dignified manner.' But what is he to do with regard to the other two powers who are parties to this interference? They were told all along, that the necessity had not arisen for this interference, that England did not wish for it, and that it would be viewed with jealousy; that, although you denied the obligation of the quadruple treaty, not thinking that a *casus fœderis* had arisen, still, in deference to the principles which dictated that treaty, you invited France and Spain to be parties to the intervention, when determined on. When you tell those powers, that the Queen of England cannot fulfil the stipulations into which she has entered, you surely cannot prohibit them from fulfilling those obligations into which they have entered at your solicitation. You cannot expect the French ministry, or the French chambers, to take such a view of their situation. The consequence will be, that France and Spain will carry out their intervention, and the very danger which you seek to avoid will arise—namely, the exclusion of English influence from Portugal, and the establishment there of the authority of France and

Spain; and then, I defy you, according to any principle of international law, to make any effectual remonstrance. Then, I say, it is infinitely better that we should continue to act in concurrence with those powers, disclaiming all separate interest, and bringing to bear only those interests which led to the establishment of the throne of Donna Maria and of the Queen of Spain. On grounds of public policy, I think it infinitely better not to embarrass or control the executive government, acting, as they must, in the midst of great difficulties, by any resolution like the one now proposed, the adoption of which must place the ministry in an undignified and false position."

After a variety of discursive observations, Sir Robert Peel concluded by reiterating his determination to support the government in their policy. This was early in the evening of the third day of the debate; and within a few minutes after Sir Robert Peel sat down, it became evident that a somewhat undignified mode had been adopted, to bring the debate to a close without a decision on the question. Almost immediately after Sir Robert Peel had spoken, about seven in the evening, the benches became empty. Within a quarter of an hour the House was counted out, not a single member of the government being present at the time; and so a double difficulty was avoided—a ministerial statement from the Foreign Secretary, and a division, which, if it had not placed the government in an actual minority, would have shown a feeling on the part of the House, against them, which would have been not a little embarrassing.

It remains only to state, of the session 1847, that it was brought to a close early in July, when the following speech was given by commission, Her Majesty not being present:—

"MY LORDS, AND GENTLEMEN,

"I have much satisfaction in being able to release you from the duties of a laborious and anxious session. I cannot



take leave of you without expressing my grateful sense of the assiduity and zeal with which you have applied yourselves to the consideration of the public interests.

“Our attention has been principally directed to the measures of immediate relief, which a great and unprecedented calamity rendered necessary.

“I have given my cheerful assent to those laws, which, by allowing the free admission of grain, and by affording facilities for the use of sugar in breweries and distilleries, tend to increase the quantity of human food, and to promote commercial intercourse.

“I rejoice to find that you have in no instance proposed new restrictions, or interfered with the liberty of foreign or internal trade, as a mode of relieving distress. I feel assured that such measures are generally ineffectual, and in some cases aggravate the evils for the alleviation of which they are adopted.

“I cordially approve of the acts of large and liberal bounty, by which you have assuaged the sufferings of my Irish subjects. I have also readily given my sanction to a law to make better provision for the permanent relief of the destitute in Ireland. I have likewise given my assent to various bills calculated to promote the agriculture and develop the industry, of that portion of the United Kingdom. My attention shall be directed to such further measures as may be conducive to those salutary purposes.

“My relations with foreign powers continue to inspire me with confidence in the maintenance of peace.

“It has afforded me great satisfaction to find that the measures which, in concert with the King of the French, the Queen of Spain, and the Queen of Portugal, I have taken for the pacification of Portugal, have been attended with success; and that the civil war which for many months had afflicted that country, has at last been brought to a bloodless termination.

"I indulge the hope that future differences between political parties in that country may be settled without an appeal to arms.

"GENTLEMEN OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS,

"I thank you for your willingness in granting me the necessary supplies; they shall be applied with due care and economy to the public service.

"I am happy to inform you, that, notwithstanding the high price of food, the revenue has, up to the present time, been more productive than I had reason to anticipate. The increased use of articles of general consumption has chiefly contributed to this result. The revenue derived from sugar, especially, has been greatly augmented by the removal of the prohibitory duties on foreign sugar.

"The various grants which you have made for education in the United Kingdom will, I trust, be conducive to the religious and moral improvement of my people.

"MY LORDS, AND GENTLEMEN,

"I think proper to inform you, that it is my intention immediately to dissolve the present parliament.

"I rely with confidence on the loyalty to the throne, and attachment to the free institutions of this country, which animate the great body of my people. I join with them in supplications to Almighty God, that the dearth by which we have been afflicted, may, by the Divine blessing, be converted into cheapness and plenty."

## CHAPTER IX.

ELECTION OF A NEW PARLIAMENT—DISTRESS AND OUTRAGE  
IN IRELAND—COMMERCIAL PANIC.

THE dissolution immediately followed the prorogation of parliament, and the election of a new one was forthwith proceeded in. Certainly no body of representatives ever went back to their constituents under more peculiar and remarkable, and in some cases irritating, circumstances, than the members of the parliament of 1841. They were returned, amid great popular excitement, to defeat a Whig ministry which had avowed the principles of commercial reform, and a modification of the protective tariff upon corn: they had borne triumphantly into power, a minister who had invariably avowed himself to be the opponent both of the total repeal of those laws, and of the Whig palliative of a fixed duty,—and the whole parliament shared in consequence the condemnation which the agricultural mind so freely showered upon the name of Sir Robert Peel and the most able and influential of the rising statesmen who had clung to and supported him in this great crisis of his personal career, and the fate of his country. The history of these six eventful years was closed, the protective tariff and the corn laws were swept from the statute book, at the bidding of the very man who was expected, by a great and hitherto paramount party, to uphold them; and by the force of circumstances and conviction, a very large proportion of the represen-

tatives, even of the agricultural party, found themselves obliged to support the sudden alteration of the whole scheme of commercial policy, and thus to disappoint the hopes of their constituents.

But this was not all; the presiding genius of this political drama having accomplished the great work which he had undertaken; having coerced his unwilling followers up to the very last act necessary for its completion, found his grasp of the reins of power suddenly paralyzed, as soon as he came to other general measures of policy, and was in turn hurled from power, leaving the vacant seat to be again filled by the very man whom he had turned out of office, and whose contemplated measures of policy he had adapted to his own hand, and carried out upon an extended scale. When we add to these sources of disappointment, of pique, and discontent, the newly-mooted and difficult points involved in the education question, we find that every conceivable element of division and discord, whether arising out of feelings of animosity, of considerations of self-interest, or of the manifold mistrusts inspired by religious jealousy, was combined, to complicate the relations between the disbanded parliament and the offended or suspicious constituencies of the country.

Perhaps the question, which at this period most violently agitated the country,—the question of Free-trade or Protection alone excepted,—was that of the endowment of the Roman Catholics by the state, for the purposes of education and religious worship. A declaration made by Lord John Russell, in answer to a question, in favour of the expediency of establishing “formal diplomatic relations between this country and Rome;”—another by the Secretary of War, that certain votes were included in the estimates, for providing means of religious worship for soldiers of the Roman Catholic



faith, on foreign service,—though small matters in themselves, acquired importance when connected with what passed in the discussion of the government scheme of education; and the fact was not to be disguised, that a very strong feeling of alarm prevailed amongst a considerable portion of the community, from whom the lapse of centuries had not eradicated the traditional hatred and mistrust of papacy, that concessions would be made which would end in the subversion of the Protestant establishment, or in the equally unpopular secularization of the government, in favour of a scheme of latitudinarianism, or indifferentism. However groundless these apprehensions may have been, there could be no doubt of their existence, and of the influence which they could not fail to exercise on the pending elections. Accordingly we find that men of all parties, Whigs and Tories alike, and even those who upon other points had always been found in the ranks of liberality and concession, very strenuously disavowed any thought of entertaining so dangerous an innovation. And these avowals were confined to no particular part of the country, and to no peculiar class of constituencies. Mr. Roebuck at Bath, the honourable Mr. Campbell (son of a minister) at Cambridge, Mr. Adair at Ipswich, Mr. Cheetham at Huddersfield, the honourable R. A. Stanley at Shrewsbury, Sir E. Bulwer Lytton at Lincoln, Mr. Sergeant Talfourd at Reading, the honourable E. Coke and Mr. Hammond in Norfolk, and Mr. Bright at Manchester, alike had to clear themselves from the suspicion of treachery or indifference to the Protestant spirit of the country, by solemn declarations of this kind; and it was notorious, that at an earlier period in the year, when Lord Lincoln sounded the constituency of the last-named place, he lost a chance of obtaining its suffrages by refusing to pledge himself upon this point.

Meantime the leaders of the principal parties in the state

came forward with the usual revelations of the motives of policy by which they had been guided in the course of the past parliament, and their general notions of the future prospects of the country. Foremost in interest amongst these was the elaborate epistle addressed by Sir Robert Peel to his constituents at Tamworth.

This document was issued some weeks before the actual dissolution of parliament. Overtures had been made to the illustrious statesman from the leading politicians of various important cities and towns in the empire, that he should cease to represent the close borough of Tamworth, and test his principles by an appeal to the larger constituencies. It was proposed that he should stand for London, for Manchester, for Liverpool, for Birmingham, for Glasgow, and other places; but Sir Robert Peel declined all these overtures, and determined to sit for his paternal borough. Under the peculiar circumstances of the country, he, perhaps, exercised a wise discretion in refraining to subject himself, even to the remotest possibility of a defeat. A defeat of Sir Robert Peel in London, or in any other great town, would have been a defeat not merely of a man, but of a principle;—and all the energies of an aggrieved, disappointed, and still powerful party, would have been placed in operation to effect it, and thereby to aim a blow at the policy of which he was not only the most prominent representative, but the strongest champion, and the most available support. Sir Robert Peel made but slight allusion to this subject, but his silence was understood, and his motives fully appreciated, both by his ancient constituency, and by the intelligent inhabitants of those great hives of wealth and industry, who would have been honoured by his acceptance of their invitation.

The document ran as follows:—

*To the Electors for the Borough of Tamworth.*

Drayton Manor, July 15, 1847.

GENTLEMEN,—There appears every probability that a dissolution of parliament will immediately take place.

If it be your wish that I should continue to represent you, I place my services at your command.

I have received the offers of support from more than one place of the first importance in respect to commercial enterprise and wealth, and to the number of the **constituent** body; but having represented you for many years, and having received from you, under trying circumstances in public affairs, signal proofs of your esteem and confidence, I am unwilling, by any act of mine, to interrupt the connection which has long subsisted between us.

But I cannot seek your support on any other than public grounds; and as the position in which I stand is, in some respects, a peculiar one, I feel it necessary to transgress the limits of an ordinary address, in soliciting your attention to the course which I have pursued in the present parliament; and in explaining, so far as is consistent with that freedom of discretion which is essential to the proper discharge of parliamentary duties, the general principles to which, if re-elected, I intend to conform.

When you last returned me to parliament, I held the chief office in the government of this great empire. I am now addressing you in a private capacity, rejoicing in the recovery of leisure and independence, without the intention or wish to resume either that authority which belongs, or ought to belong, to the possession of office, or that influence which is conferred by the lead and guidance of a great political party aspiring to power.

But I am not, on that account, the less anxious to vindicate, to your satisfaction, the motives by which I have been influenced, the measures to which I have been a party, and

the general course of policy of the administration with which I was connected.

The chief acts of that administration, and the circumstances which led to its dissolution, must be familiar to your recollection.

You have now ample means for judging, whether the conduct of the government, in respect to the external relations of this country, was calculated to promote the public welfare. You can contrast the position of affairs in 1841 and 1846, and can determine whether the stability of our Indian Empire has been impaired, or whether a succession of glorious achievements in the field, and the vigour and firmness, and, above all, the justice and moderation of those who have directed the public councils in India, have not increased throughout the East respect for the British name, and promoted willing obedience to British authority.

There is, I fear, some justice in the reproach, that the people and the parliament of this country are comparatively indifferent, excepting under circumstances of sudden excitement, to the administration of foreign affairs. But it would be a grievous neglect of duty on the part of those, whose choice of representatives will determine the general character of the future parliament, to exclude from their serious consideration this great department of the public business.

When the late government was formed, the charge of that department was committed by the Queen to a Minister, of whom I may say with truth, that he succeeded in acquiring the esteem and confidence of every honest man engaged in the diplomatic service of other States, and that he made that esteem and confidence conducive to the great object of his political life—the maintenance of honourable peace.

It is for you to judge whether Lord Aberdeen acted wisely, in disregarding those appeals to national pride and national sensibilities, which, if not provocations to war, were great



impediments to the maintenance of peace, and in resolving to adjust, if possible, by means of amicable arrangement and mutual concession, the petty differences which constantly occur between powerful nations, and which, if treated in any other spirit, are easily inflamed into national quarrels.

It is for you to judge, in reviewing our discussions with the United States, whether it would have been wise to have insisted on extreme rights of territory on the north-eastern frontier of the province of Maine, and on the banks of the Columbia River, and thus (even if war could be averted), to have ensured, for another half-century, a controversy full of bitterness and irritation; or whether it was not the better policy to propose, in the spirit of peace, conditions perfectly compatible with the honour of each country, and not requiring from either any sacrifice, territorial or commercial, which would not be dearly purchased by the cost of a single week's hostilities.

But, gentlemen, however important are the considerations to which I have been adverting, there are others, in respect to which, from their relation to our social condition and domestic policy, you will probably feel a more immediate concern. The most prominent at the present time, are those connected with questions of religion, and with the recent changes in our financial and commercial legislation.

On these points I desire to enter into unreserved explanation with you. I write without concert or communication with any other person whatever, and the views and opinions therefore which I may express, are expressed on my own behalf exclusively.

I feel, gentlemen, the deepest interest in all that concerns the welfare of the Established Church. I feel that interest, from sincere conviction of the truth of its doctrines, and from the firm belief that the Established Church is capable of being made, and through the tempered

zeal, and active exertions of the highest spiritual authorities, is in the progress of being made, the most powerful instrument that exists for administering the consolations of religion, for spreading the knowledge of Divine truth, and for supplying the imperfections of human laws, by the obligations and restraints of religious duty.

I have resisted, and shall continue to resist, every proposal for appropriating any portion of the revenues of the Church, in any part of the United Kingdom, to other than ecclesiastical purposes in direct connection with the Church.

I have felt it, however, to be quite consistent with a warm attachment to the interests of the Church, to take a leading part in those measures which had for their object the abolition of ecclesiastical sinecures, the curtailment of excessive emoluments, and the application of such a portion of the revenues of cathedral and collegiate churches as was not required for the purposes of those institutions, to the partial remedy of great evils in the social and spiritual condition of this country.

A very few years since, it was publicly declared on the highest authority, that "a vast proportion of the people of this country were left destitute of the opportunities of public worship and Christian instruction." Of this fact, such proofs as the following were adduced—That there were in London and its suburbs four parishes containing an aggregate of 166,000 persons, with church-room for 8,200, being not quite one-twentieth of the population—that there were in the same district 34 parishes with a population of 1,137,000 inhabitants, and church-room for 101,632 persons—that in our own neighbourhood, in the diocese of Lichfield and Coventry, there were 16 parishes, each having above 10,000 inhabitants, with an aggregate population of 235,000 persons, and church-room for about 29,000.

No doubt it was within the competency of parliament to

make provision for the supply of these alarming deficiencies in the means of religious instruction, by large grants of public money derived from general taxation ; but I felt persuaded that it would not be for the advantage of religion that such a proposal should be made, until after all the resources of the Church, which could properly be rendered available for the purpose, had been applied to it. I felt also persuaded that the appropriation of those resources, with the willing consent of the Church, to such objects as the augmentation of poor benefices, the establishment of new ecclesiastical districts, and the general improvement of pastoral superintendence in very populous parishes, would not only increase the local efficiency of the Establishment, but would tend to confirm its hold on the respect and attachment of the people.

It was for such purposes that, with the willing consent of the Church, I proposed in the year 1843 a bill, which passed into a law, for making better provision for the spiritual care of populous parishes in England and Wales. Under that law there have been constituted, and agreed to be constituted, 218 ecclesiastical districts and new parishes ; and spiritual instruction and pastoral superintendence will thus have been provided for a population of about 764,000 souls. I oppose this fact to the charge of indifference or hostility to the welfare of the Church.

I certainly did not think it inconsistent with the true interests of the Church, in cases wherein I deemed the claim a just one, to protect the rights, and to consult the feelings and wishes of those who dissent from its doctrines.

With these impressions, I gave my support to measures for quieting the titles to Dissenting places of worship, and for repealing many penal statutes in matters of religion, obsolete so far as their practical operation is concerned, but at variance with the mild spirit of modern legis-

lation, and giving gratuitous offence by implying suspicion and distrust, without offering the slightest remedy against any apprehended danger.

With these impressions also, while cordially approving of the proposal of her Majesty's present government to extend the system of public instruction in this part of the United Kingdom, I expressed an opinion that it ought to be sufficiently comprehensive to include the children of Roman Catholic parents.

During the period to which I am referring, the state of Ireland (that fruitful source of constantly recurring and painful discussion), was repeatedly forced upon the consideration of parliament. I shall, in this address, advert only to the topics in connection with Irish affairs, which have excited the chief interest in this part of the empire, and in respect to which, opinions and pledges are now demanded by many constituencies from those who are candidates for their favour.

I will preface the observations I have to make on this most important subject, by a quotation from the writings of that eminent man, whom posterity will regard as the most eloquent of the orators, and the most profound of the philosophic statesmen, of modern times.

It is now fifty years since Mr. Burke, in a letter addressed to his son, placed upon record the following opinions :—

“Being myself,” he says, “no more than a common layman commonly informed in controversies, leading only a very common life, and having only a common citizen's interest in the Church or in the State, yet to you I will say, in justice to my own sentiments, that not one of those zealots for a Protestant interest, wishes more sincerely than I do, perhaps not half so sincerely, for the support of the Established Church in both these kingdoms. It is a great link towards holding fast the connection of religion with the State ; and for keeping



these two islands in their present critical independence of Constitution, in a close connection of opinion and affection. I wish it well, as the religion of the greater number of the primary land-proprietors of the kingdom, with whom all Establishments of Church and State, for strong political reasons, ought in my opinion to be firmly connected. I wish it well, because it is more closely combined than any other of the Church systems, with the Crown, which is the stay of the mixed Constitution, because it is, as things now stand, the sole connecting political principle between the Constitutions of the two independent kingdoms. I have another, and infinitely a stronger reason for wishing it well; it is, that in the present time I consider it as one of the main pillars of the Christian religion itself. The body and substance of every religion, I regard much more than any of the forms and dogmas of the particular sects. Its fall would leave a great void, which nothing else, of which I can form any distinct idea, might fill. I respect the Catholic hierarchy, and the Presbyterian republic. But I know that the hope or the fear of establishing either of them is, in these kingdoms, equally chimerical, even if I preferred one or the other of them to the Establishment, which I certainly do not.

“These are some of my reasons for wishing the support of the Church of Ireland, as by law established. These reasons are founded as well on the absolute as on the relative situation of that kingdom.”

To the reasons thus adduced by Mr. Burke for the support of the Church in Ireland, must now be added the weight and authority of that compact, guaranteeing its maintenance, to which, at the time of the Legislative Union, the parliaments of the two kingdoms were consenting parties.

In a subsequent part of the same letter, Mr. Burke proceeds to observe:—

“Ireland has an established government, and a religion

legally established, which are to be preserved. It has a people who are to be preserved too, and to be led by reason, principle, sentiment, and interest, to acquiesce in that government. Ireland is a country under peculiar circumstances. The people of Ireland are a very mixed people, and the quantities of the several ingredients in the mixture are very much disproportioned to each other. Are we to govern this mixed body as if it were composed of the most simple elements, comprehending the whole in one system of benevolent legislation: or are we not rather to provide for the several parts according to the various and diversified necessities of the heterogeneous nature of the mass? Would not common reason and common honesty dictate to us the policy of regulating the people in the several descriptions of which they are composed, according to the natural ranks and classes of an orderly civil society, under a common protecting sovereign, and under a form of constitution favourable at once to authority and to freedom, such as the British constitution boasts to be, and such as it is, to those who enjoy it.

“You have an ecclesiastical establishment, which, though the religion of the Prince, and of most of the first class of landed proprietors, is not the religion of the major part of the inhabitants, and which, consequently, does not answer to *them* any one purpose of a religious establishment. This is a state of things which no man in his senses can call perfectly happy. But it is the state of Ireland.”

It was with reference to that state of Ireland, and with reference to such considerations as those to which Mr. Burke has adverted, that the government with which I was connected brought forward measures which constitute no precedent for any other part of the United Kingdom, but are specially applicable to the peculiar condition and structure of society in Ireland.

Some of those measures encountered a vehement opposition; the more formidable, because it was offered much less from party or purely political considerations, than from sincere conscientious scruples. But, gentlemen, I am bound to avow, that I look back with cordial satisfaction to the part which I took in support of those measures, and to the spirit in which they were conceived. It was a spirit of justice and kindness towards our Roman Catholic fellow-subjects in Ireland—a spirit which will, I trust, animate our future legislation with reference to that country. It is strongly recommended to us by many powerful considerations—by painful recollection of our relations with Ireland in earlier periods of our history—by sympathy with her present sufferings—by the urgent necessity, not more for her welfare than our own, to improve the condition, moral and physical, of her people.

I will not be deterred, by the risk of provoking new, or reviving dormant hostility, from recalling to your recollection the general character and object of the measures to which I have adverted.

In the first place, we altered the law in respect to Charitable Donations and Bequests in Ireland. We enabled the Crown to appoint commissioners for the better management of such donations and bequests, of whom one-half in number must necessarily be persons professing the Roman Catholic faith. For the exclusive consideration of the Roman Catholic commissioners were reserved all questions relating to bequests which concerned the usages or discipline of the Church of Rome. We gave full power to all persons and bodies corporate, by deed or by will, to give estates or property of any description, in trust, for the building or upholding of Roman Catholic places of worship, or for the maintenance of any person in holy orders of the Church of Rome, having pastoral superintendence of a congregation.

We enabled her Majesty to endow new Colleges for the advancement of learning in Ireland. We gave every facility to the students in those Colleges for receiving religious instruction according to the creed which they might profess, and for attendance on divine worship at the church or chapel which should be approved by their parents and guardians. We at the same time provided that there should be no obligation to attend any theological lecture or religious instruction, excepting with the approbation of parents and guardians; and we prohibited the administration of any religious test, as a qualification for the admission of students, or for the tenure of an office, or the enjoyment of any privilege or advantage in connection with the new Colleges.

We increased the grant for the College of Maynooth. That grant was originally made in the reign of George the Third, and by the advice of Mr. Pitt, at a period of great national peril, "when, to guard this empire and Ireland in particular from the enterprises of a dangerous and malignant power, and to protect all civilized society from the inroads of anarchy, the king found it necessary to avail himself of every rational aid, foreign and domestic, and to call upon the skill, courage, and experience of all his subjects, wheresoever dispersed."

It was at such a crisis, and under such circumstances, that an Irish parliament, exclusively Protestant in its character, established the College of Maynooth, and received from the Throne congratulations "on having laid a wise foundation for educating at home the Roman Catholic clergy."

Fifty years had elapsed in 1845 since those congratulations were offered. For fifty years a grant of public money had been annually continued for the avowed purpose of aiding the education of Roman Catholic youth in Roman Catholic doctrines, and fitting them for holy orders in the Church



of Rome. We considered that there was, at any rate, no new violation of religious principle in making that grant less inadequate to the purpose for which it was destined, and in giving to it avowedly that character of permanency which it had acquired practically by the prescription of half a century. We thought this a wiser and more dignified course for the House of Commons to pursue, than to exhibit annually the surly acquiescence in a niggardly vote, which was equally open to any just objection on the ground of violated principle, and which effected no good, and excited no gratitude.

In the course of the discussions which took place on the Maynooth bill, two questions were put to me: the first, whether the increased grant to Maynooth was part of a systematic arrangement, which contemplated ultimately the endowment of the Roman Catholic clergy in Ireland—the second, whether I would give a pledge, on the ground of conscientious objection, against the entertainment, at any future time, of a proposal for such endowment.

To the first question I returned an answer on the part of the government collectively. I stated explicitly, that the increased grant to Maynooth was proposed as a single and separate measure, not intended to facilitate, in the slightest degree, the endowment of the Roman Catholic clergy. I knew, indeed, that many members of the government, not adverse to the grant to Maynooth, would offer the most decided opposition to any proposal for endowment.

In answering the second question, I spoke then, as I am speaking now, for myself exclusively. I said, in substance, that I would not give the pledge required from me that I foresaw, indeed, very great practical difficulties in the way of endowment—great difficulties, as well from the declared objections to such a measure on the part of the Roman Catholic laity and Roman Catholic clergy in Ireland,

as from the strong repugnance to it in the public mind of this country; that I had no plan for solving those difficulties; but that I would not fetter my discretion as a legislator by a positive pledge to refuse even the consideration of any such plan, at all times, and under all circumstances.

The occasions are very rare on which it is consistent with the proper discharge of parliamentary functions, to enter into specific engagements of this nature.

They might, perhaps, in this case, be entered into justifiably, by those who, after extended inquiry and mature deliberation, have come to the conclusion, that by allowing a decent stipend to a Roman Catholic priest, instead of leaving him dependent for the means of subsistence on an impoverished flock, of which he is the spiritual, and, in truth, also the temporal guide, we should be confirming an influence already too great, and obstructing the diffusion of a purer faith—still more justifiably by those whose conscientious conviction it is, that by such an act we are sanctioning and adopting error, and sinfully offending Almighty God, by consenting to the endowment of men who deny and reject divine truth.

But I cannot give my consent to either of these conclusions.

I feel with regard to the first, that nothing can be less successful in weakening the influence of the Roman Catholic religion in Ireland, than the course we have hitherto taken,—that we have made no advance towards that object, either by penal laws or civil disabilities, or by a system of complete alienation from the ministers of that religion.

With regard to the second, I cannot admit that the payment, with the sanction of parliament, of a given sum to the minister of a religious creed not being that of the State, is tantamount to the adoption, or sanction by the State, of the

doctrines which that minister may teach, and is subversive of the principle of an established church. If it be so, we ought to rescind many acts of the crown and of parliament, which are open substantially to the same objection. Year after year (frequently without one dissenting voice), we have voted the sum required for the support of Presbyterian ministers in Ireland, there being included among the number, many professing and teaching Unitarian doctrines. We have provided, by act of parliament, fixed allowances, paid from a public fund, to Roman Catholic chaplains, in attendance on prisons, and on workhouses. In order to facilitate the submission, and to retain quiet possession of important colonies, we have not hesitated to guarantee, not only the endowment of Roman Catholic priests, but the continued establishment of the Roman Catholic religion.

If, on the ground of conscientious scruples, we are bound to refuse even the consideration of any proposal for allotting a stipend to Roman Catholic priests in Ireland, if, by entertaining such a proposal, we imply the sanction of Roman Catholic errors, and justly incur Divine punishment for our apostacy, is it safe to maintain our connection with Canada and Malta, and continue parties, not merely to the payment of Roman Catholic priests, but to the establishment of the Roman Catholic religion, in dependencies of the British crown? Considerations, political or constitutional, may no doubt forbid that to be done in Ireland, which is permissible in Canada; but can that, which is prohibited in one part of the queen's dominions, on purely conscientious and religious grounds, be consistently tolerated and encouraged in another?

I, for one, cannot undertake, on those grounds, to fetter my discretion for all time to come on the subject to which I have been referring.

I have thus addressed you, certainly without any inten-

tional reserve, on the domestic questions, which, from their connection with religion, are of pre-eminent importance. I approach those (the next in point of interest) which have reference to our financial and commercial policy.

When the late government succeeded to power, there had been for each of some years preceding, a deficiency in the amount of revenue, as compared with the expenditure. The amount of the deficiency in the year 1841, was not less than £2,100,000. An attempt had been made in the year 1840, to supply the deficiency, by an addition of ten per cent to the assessed taxes, and of five per cent to the revenues of customs and excise. The increase thus made to the scale of the assessed taxes answered the expectation with which it was imposed. But the far greater part of the amount expected to be raised was to have been supplied by the addition made to the duties of customs and excise, that is to say, by increased taxation upon articles of general consumption, and upon the raw materials of domestic manufacture. The estimated produce of these additional duties was £1,910,000. They actually realized, on the most favourable supposition, not more than £750,000, falling short therefore of the estimate by no less a sum than £1,160,000.

Under these circumstances, it became my duty, as the chief minister of finance, to advise the adoption of effectual measures for supplying the deficit between the public revenue and the charge upon it.

As the organ of the government, I proposed a tax upon all incomes above a certain amount. I accompanied the proposal of that tax with a partial reformation of the commercial code, reducing many duties onerous to the trade and commercial enterprise of the country. The principle of reformation adopted in 1842, comprehended the abolition of prohibitions, and the abatement of duties of a prohibitory character; the reduction of duties on raw materials, to an



amount not exceeding five per cent *ad valorem*, and on articles partially manufactured, and completely manufactured, to an amount not exceeding twelve and twenty per cent respectively.

The total amount of reductions of duty, was in the year

1842 .....	£1,092,690
1843 .....	411,821
1844 .....	458,810
	<hr/>
	£1,963,321

Notwithstanding these reductions, the ordinary revenue of the United Kingdom, that is, the revenue derived from the customs, excise, stamps, and taxes, and post office, &c. amounted in the year

1841 to .....	£47,917,000
1844 to .....	48,125,000

In taking the revenue of the latter year, I have, of course, excluded altogether the receipts from the property tax, and also the receipts from casual sources of revenue, such as the payment of China money in reimbursement of the expenses of the war.

The period of the three years, for which the income-tax was originally passed, expired on the 5th of April, 1845. Encouraged by the experience of the past, the government proposed to parliament the renewal of the income-tax for a further period of three years, and the extended application of those principles of commercial reform which had been previously acted upon.

The duties on raw materials used in manufacture, on dye-stuffs, on oils, as well as on various articles producing little or no revenue, were altogether repealed. The manufacture of glass was relieved from the duties of excise, and from the supervision and interference of excise-officers. The amount of the duties remitted in 1845 was not less than £4,511,000.

In 1846 duties were again remitted to the extent of £1,151,000.

The total amount of taxation remitted between the commencement of the session of 1842, and the resignation of the late government in 1846, was £7,625,000.

The ordinary revenue of 1841, was £47,917,000.

That of 1846 (again deducting the receipts from property tax and casual revenue), was £47,554,000.

A portion, however, of the receipts of this latter year, amounting to £416,000, must be attributed to the increased revenue from sugar, in consequence of the reduction, by the present government, of the duties upon foreign sugar. After making due allowance for this increase, it will be seen, that the reductions of taxation effected by the late government, to the amount of £7,625,000, were accompanied by a diminution of revenue to the extent only of £779,000.

The result of these two experiments has therefore been, that, in the years 1842, 1843, and 1844, the whole amount lost to the revenue by reduced taxation was more than replaced. In the two years 1845 and 1846, nine-tenths of a far larger reduction had already been replaced. But the case does not rest here. Notwithstanding the disastrous circumstances of the late harvest, and the depression of trade, the revenue of 1847 again exhibits a considerable increase on that of the preceding year. The last published balance-sheet of the United Kingdom is that for the year ending the 5th of April, 1847. If we compare the ordinary revenue of that year (after deducting the property tax) with the ordinary revenue of the year ending 5th April, 1841, we find

Year ending 5th of April, 1841 .....	£47,218,178
"      "      1847 .....	48,161,597
Difference in favour of 1847 .....	<u>£943,419</u>

This difference in favour of the latter year far exceeds any increased receipt from the admission of foreign sugar.

A statement published on the 6th instant carries the accounts for Great Britain down to the present time, viz., to 5th July, 1847, those for Ireland being not yet complete. It exhibits for this portion of the empire a total increase of ordinary revenue, as compared with the year ending 5th July, 1846, of no less than £2,615,871, of which (notwithstanding the remission of the duties on corn), £1,812,773 comes under the heads of customs and excise, or, in other words, arises from increased consumption.

The whole effect, therefore, of the measures of the late government has been to remove more than seven millions and a half of taxes: while the ordinary revenue of the last financial year, for which they were called upon to provide, has considerably exceeded the ordinary revenue (derived from the same sources) of the financial year that immediately preceded their accession to office.

In the foregoing observations I have made no reference to the reduction of duty on wheat, and on those other kinds of grain which were included in the corn bill of last year. The amount of seven and a half millions of taxation, to the reduction of which I have just referred, does not include any advantage which may be derived to the consumers from the reduction in 1842, and prospective repeal in 1846 of these duties.

I have already mentioned to you the general objects contemplated by the reformation of the tariff—the abolition of prohibition—the reduction of prohibitory duties—the repeal of duties on the raw materials of manufacture; but I am desirous of calling your attention specially to the removal and relaxation of duties levied on the import of articles from abroad, which enter largely into the consumption of the people as articles of subsistence.

You are well aware that it was upon this point that the greatest difference of opinion prevailed, and that the pro-

posal of the government to repeal, at an early period, the duties upon foreign grain, was the main cause of its dissolution.

I wish to place before you in the clearest and most intelligible form, the extent of the several measures proposed by the late government, for the abatement and repeal of the duties to which I have above referred. The first column of the following table specifies the amount of duty on the several articles payable on the 1st January, 1842; the second column, the amount of duty on the 1st August, 1846:—

## RATES OF DUTY CHARGEABLE.

	1st January, 1842.			1st August, 1846.		
Animals living, viz. oxen, cows, sheep, &c....	Prohibited. ...			Free.		
Meat, salt and fresh .....	Prohibited. ...			Free.		
	£.	s.	d.	£.	s.	d.
Bacon, per cwt. ....	1	9	4	.....	Free.	
Butter, per cwt. ....	1	1	0	.....	0	10 0
Cheese, per cwt. ....	0	11	0	.....	0	5 0
Cocoa, Foreign, per lb. ....	0	0	6	.....	0	0 2
Coffee, Foreign, per lb. ....	0	1	3	.....	0	0 6
Currants, Foreign, per cwt. ....	1	3	2	.....	0	15 0
Hams, per cwt. ....	1	9	4	.....	0	7 0
Lard, per cwt. ....	0	8	0	.....	Free.	
Rice, per cwt. ....	0	15	9	.....	0	1 0
Spirits, per gallon .....	1	2	10	.....	0	15 0
Sugar, per cwt. (British Colonial) .....	1	5	2	.....	0	14 0

With respect to the Corn-Laws, there were in force on the 1st January, 1842, rates of duty on the importation of foreign corn, varying according to the average price in the home market.

When wheat was 62s. a quarter,	the duty was 24s. 8d.	
„ 68s. a quarter	„	16s. 8d.
„ 73s. a quarter	„	1s. 0d.

Corresponding duties were levied on the same principle on the import of other descriptions of grain. On barley, for instance, and on Indian corn, when the price of barley was under 34s. the quarter, the duty on the import of a quarter



of barley, and also of a quarter of Indian corn, was 12s. 4d.; when above 4ls. the duty was reduced to 1s.

These several duties were reduced in the session of 1842. In that of 1846, provision was made for their total repeal on the 1st of February, 1849.

Of the various proposals made by the late government for the reduction of duties on articles of subsistence and general consumption, that which contemplated the ultimate repeal of the duties on foreign grain, encountered the most decided opposition.

Let me recall to your recollection the circumstances under which that proposal was made.

In the months of September and October, 1845, there were indications in many parts of the United Kingdom of that mysterious disorder which has affected to so serious an extent the potato crop. There was great alarm, in Ireland especially, as to the consequences. From various authorities in that country entitled to great respect, representations were received, calculated to make a deep impression on the minds of those who, as servants of the Crown, were responsible for the adoption of every reasonable precaution against a threatened scarcity of food. To some of these representations I will briefly refer.

The Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, writing on the 20th October, stated, "The accounts of the potato crop continue to be of the most discouraging nature. Potatoes dug up, to all appearance perfectly sound, after a short time begin to decay, and very soon rot altogether. Under such circumstances, it is impossible to form any decisive opinion as to the amount of the calamity."

On the 24th of October the Lord Lieutenant wrote:—"We constantly receive satisfactory reports of the state of the potatoes when dug, and learn a few days afterwards that

they have all rotted in the pits. We do not know, and cannot know, the extent of the evil."

The secretary of the Royal Agricultural Association (an association formed of the chief landed proprietors in Ireland), writing about the same time, observed:—"When I issued a circular about a month since to the secretaries of one hundred and twenty local societies in connection with the central one, I got several answers from persons stating that the disease was not apparent in their immediate neighbourhood; but I have since received letters from most of them, stating, that, upon digging the crop, they found the disease in almost every quarter; and I may safely say that at present there is not a county in Ireland that is not more or less affected by it. I shall barely add, that the greatest panic appears to exist in all parts of the country."

At a public meeting, held in Dublin, on the 31st of October, 1845, at which the Duke of Leinster presided, it was resolved, "That it has been ascertained beyond a doubt that Famine, and consequently Pestilence, are immediately imminent, unless the government, without hesitation or delay, take the most prompt measures to provide for this people." It was resolved also, "That we respectfully call upon the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland to order the ports of Ireland to be opened for the importation of Indian corn, rice, and other articles suited for human food."

We thought it possible that reports even from such authorities sent from the spot at a period of great excitement, might be unduly influenced by the prevailing alarm. We despatched therefore to Ireland, in the month of October, two men (of the highest eminence in the departments of science to which they belong), having no local connection with Ireland, Professor Lindley and Dr. Lyon Playfair.

We sent them to Ireland for the double purpose of sug-

gesting, if possible, some remedy against the threatened evil, and of conveying to us their impressions as to its real extent.

Their report was more unfavourable than any other. They stated "that they had consulted persons acquainted with the facts of the disease; that they had visited the districts lying between Dublin and Drogheda, and inspected various potato fields and stores in the counties of Dublin, Louth, Meath, Westmeath, and a part of Kildare; and that judging from the evidence thus collected, and from what they had seen of the progress of the disease in England, they could come to no other conclusion than that one-half of the actual potato crop of Ireland was either destroyed, or in a state unfit for the food of man."

It was no doubt possible that all these parties might be, in some degree, mistaken—that events might subsequently prove that they had magnified the extent of the evil; but place yourselves in the position of those who were responsible for the public safety, who received such reports at the commencement of winter, without a hope of additional supply from internal sources for the long period of nine months, and you will not be disposed to pronounce a harsh judgment on their motives for advising that increased facilities should be given for the importation of food from other countries.

You will bear in mind that the visitation was a very peculiar one—"That," to use the words of the Lord Lieutenant, "we did not know, and could not know, the extent of the evil;" that it was an evil not confined to these islands; that many other countries in Europe were suffering from it; and that, in some of them, the restrictions on the import of food had been already suspended.

I am bound to admit, that if the advice given had been limited to a suspension of similar restrictions in this country, there probably would not have been a very serious difference

of opinion. Many who might have doubted whether the precaution was not superfluous, would probably have offered no decided resistance to its being taken.

The point on which there was, and still is, the greatest conflict of opinion, was the proposal to reconsider the whole question of the Corn Laws, with a view to their ultimate repeal.

When I proposed to the cabinet on the 1st of November, 1845, the temporary suspension of all duties on foreign corn, it became necessary for me at that time to decide, whether I could undertake to support, after the period of suspension should have expired, the restoration of the pre-existing law. Such an undertaking implied, of course, resistance with the whole weight and authority of the government to any proposal that might be made in parliament, by others, for the modification of that law in its principle or in its leading enactments.

I found it impossible, consistently with my sense of public duty, to give an assurance to that effect.

In justifying my decision in this respect, I have no desire to take any undue advantage of events which have since occurred. That terrible scourge which has since afflicted Ireland, which has demanded an extraordinary advance of ten millions of money, for the purpose of averting from that country the horrors of famine, must not be pleaded as a vindication of the course taken in January, 1846.

But, gentlemen, no prudent minister deciding on that course at that time, could safely exclude from his consideration the probability that the same disorder which had affected the potato crop of 1845, might affect that of 1846. The experience of other countries in which the blight had appeared, tended to show that it was not limited to a single season, and as an early proof that apprehensions on that head were not without foundation, I will quote from a letter, received



from Professor Lindley on the 18th of February, 1846, the following extract :

“I feel it my duty to apprise you at the earliest possible moment, of the following alarming facts, in regard to the potato crop of *next season*. It has been ascertained beyond all doubt that diseased sets will produce a diseased crop. Evidence in confirmation of this was produced yesterday before the Horticultural Society, in the presence of Sir Charles Lemon, Sir Philip Egerton, Lord Grey, and others ; and for your own information I enclose you some proofs of it in the shape of the haulm of new potato plants grown at Bicton in Devonshire. They were perfectly healthy in appearance in January, and now they are advanced beyond the first stage of decay.

“I would have communicated this information to you yesterday, if I had not wished for leisure to re-examine and reconsider the evidence in my possession, so that all possibility of error or misconception might be guarded against. I have now spent some hours in re-examining the evidence, and not a doubt remains in my mind, *that next year's crop is in jeopardy.*”

Such was the opinion of Professor Lindley, tending to confirm the apprehension, that from the same cause, a second suspension of the Corn Law might become necessary.

It appeared to me, that considering the nature of that law—considering that it was passed with the view of insuring, through its own unassisted operation, an adequate supply of foreign corn in case of necessity—a single suspension of it on the first occasion of severe trial, would be a powerful argument against its permanent continuance, and that the necessity for renewed suspension (should it recur), would add greatly to the weight of that argument.

But, independently of this consideration, there were other and more important reasons which influenced my decision.

My confidence in the validity of the reasons on which I had myself heretofore relied, for the maintenance of restrictions on the import of corn had been materially weakened. It had been weakened by the conflict of argument on the principle of a restrictive policy—by many concurring proofs that the wages of labour do not vary with the price of corn—by the contrast presented in two successive periods of dearth and abundance, in the health, morals, tranquillity, and general prosperity of the whole community—by serious doubts, whether, in the present condition of this country, cheapness and plenty are not ensured for the future in a higher degree by the free intercourse in corn, than by restrictions on its importation for the purpose of giving protection to domestic agriculture.

It had been weakened also by the following considerations, which were in a great degree new elements in forming a judgment on this vital matter.

The general repeal of prohibitory duties, and the recent application of the principles of Free Trade to almost all articles of import from abroad, made the Corn Laws the object of more searching scrutiny and more invidious comment, and narrowed the ground on which their defence could be maintained.

Among the articles of foreign import prohibited up to the year 1842, and then admitted at low rates of duty, were some important articles of agricultural produce—salted and fresh meat, oxen, sheep, cows, &c. You probably recollect the panic which this admission caused—the forced sale of stock, the prophecies that it would be impossible to compete with the foreign grazier, and that meat would be reduced to three-pence a pound. Five years have passed since this great change in the law took place, and your own experience will enable you to judge whether the panic was well-founded, and whether the prophecies have been fulfilled.

The complete failure of those prophecies had naturally had its effect on public opinion, with regard to the probable consequences of a freer intercourse in other articles of agricultural produce.

There was another circumstance still more calculated to diminish apprehensions as to the risk of opening the corn-market of this country to foreign competition. There has appeared of late years a tendency to increase in the consumption of articles of subsistence much more rapid than the increase in the population. It is difficult, if not impossible, on account of the absence of statistical information, to measure accurately that increase in the case of articles of first necessity, such as corn and meat. But it may be inferred from the relative consumption, at different periods, of articles in respect to which the comparison can be instituted.

The following is an account of some of the principal articles entered for home consumption in the years 1841 and 1846 respectively:—

ARTICLES.	1841.	1846.
Cocoa . . . . . lbs.	1,930,764 ...	2,962,327
Coffee . . . . . lbs.	28,420,980 ...	36,781,391
Currants . . . . . cwts.	190,071 ...	359,315
Rice . . . . . cwts.	245,887 ...	466,961
Pepper . . . . . lbs.	2,750,790 ...	3,297,431
Sugar .. . . . cwts.	4,065,971 ...	5,231,845
Molasses . . . . . cwts.	402,422 ...	582,665
Tea . . . . . lbs.	36,681,877 ...	46,728,208
Tobacco and Snuff . . . . . lbs.	22,308,385 ...	27,001,908
Brandy . . . . . galls.	1,165,137 ...	1,515,954
Geneva . . . . . galls.	15,404 ...	40,211
British Spirits . . . . . galls.	20,642,333 ...	23,122,581
Malt charged with duty . . . . . bshls.	36,164,448 ...	41,979,000

Surely it is impossible to refer to this comparative table without being forcibly struck by the rapid increase in the consumption of the articles which it embraces. Can there be a doubt that if the consumption of articles of secondary

necessity has been thus advancing, the consumption of articles of first necessity, of meat and of bread for instance, has been making at least an equally rapid progress?

During the greater part of the period included in the return, from the middle of 1842 to the end of 1846, the free-trade measures have been in operation. They have been in operation, therefore, concurrently at least with these evidences of the increasing ease and comfort of the people. Other causes have no doubt contributed to that ease and comfort; but even if the whole effect be assigned to those other causes—to railway enterprise, or anything else—it does not affect my present argument. If there be from any cause a tendency to the consumption of articles of the first necessity much more rapid than the increase of population, the responsibility of undertaking to regulate the supply of food by legislative restraints, and the difficulty of maintaining those restraints in the event of any sudden check to prosperity, or increased price of subsistence, will be greatly augmented, while, on the other hand, the danger to be apprehended from foreign competition is materially lessened.

It was from the combined influence of these various considerations—from diminished confidence in the necessity or advantage of Protection—from the increasing difficulty of resisting the application to articles of food, of those principles which had been gradually applied to so many other articles—from the result of the experiment made with regard to cattle and meat in 1842—from the evidences of rapidly increasing consumption—from the aggravation of every other difficulty in the maintenance of the Corn Laws, by the fact of their suspension on the first real pressure—it was from the combined influence of such considerations, that I came to the conclusion that the attempt to maintain those laws inviolate after their suspension would be impolitic, that the struggle for their maintenance would assume a new



character, and that no advantage to be gained by success could counterbalance the consequences of failure, or even the evils attending protracted conflict.

My opinions in this respect may have been erroneous, but they were not formed without mature and painful deliberation, and I am wholly unconscious of any single motive of self-interest, personal or political, which was not calculated to bias my judgment in favour of an opposite conclusion. If, from the confidence which the agricultural interest had reposed in the government, and the support they had freely given to it, that interest had a special claim upon me, I should have ill-satisfied that claim by giving advice at a very critical period, which might certainly have been more acceptable—which might have protected myself from the imputation of being inconsistent and unfaithful—but which in my heart and conscience I believed to be, as applicable to that time and those circumstances, unsound and dangerous.

Between the maintenance of the Corn Laws inviolate, and a measure involving their ultimate repeal, I saw no middle course satisfactory or advantageous to any interest: I saw still less of satisfaction or advantage in indecision and irrational delay: I could not admit the incompetency of the present parliament to deal with this as with every other question of public concern: there appeared to me, upon the whole, much less of public evil in the resolution finally to adjust the question of the Corn Laws, than in any other that could be then adopted; and that being my deliberate conviction, I felt it to be my duty to incur the painful sacrifices which the acting upon that conviction must inevitably entail.

There is no event that has since occurred—I speak of events bearing directly upon the merits of the question

at issue—which does not confirm me in the belief that, even with special reference to the agricultural interest, the course taken was preferable to any other.

So much, gentlemen, with regard to the past. In respect to the future, it is my intention, if re-elected, to conform, on all matters connected, with our financial and commercial concerns, to the general principles on which I have acted while in power.

Acting with the caution and circumspection which tend to make reformation permanent, by making it safe, and which are indispensably requisite in all cases wherein the public credit, or wherein extensive and complicated interests are concerned, I shall feel disposed to support such measures as are calculated to remove any remaining restrictions on commerce—to abate duties that are levied for the purposes of protection, or that, by their amount, defeat the purposes of revenue—to apportion equitably the burden of taxation—and to better the condition of those who labour for their subsistence.

Such measures are not only perfectly compatible with, but are mainly conducive to those great objects of constitutional policy, which it has been, from the commencement of my public life, as it will be to its close, my unvarying purpose to uphold.

It is my firm persuasion, that the course sanctioned by the present parliament, with reference to our financial and commercial policy, has tended to fortify the established institutions of this country, to inspire confidence in the equity and benevolence of the legislature, to maintain the just authority of an hereditary nobility, and to discourage the desire for democratic change in the constitution of the House of Commons.

It has aided the government in conducting the administra-

tion of internal affairs, and in maintaining the public tranquillity, even during a period of suffering from depression in trade, and a high price of food, much more through the mild influence of general contentment, than through the appliance of force, or the harsh exercise of the civil power. And if the sad times of a yet severer trial should return, that trial will not be borne with the less fortitude and patience, when the privations that accompany it can be ascribed solely to causes over which legislation has no control.

I have thus, gentlemen, explained to you the course which I have pursued, and that to which, if re-elected, I intend to conform.

In a few days, probably, the trust you have committed to me, will be replaced in your hands. If you disapprove of that which I have done—if you think the commercial policy erroneous, or the motives for adopting it insufficient or unworthy, I cannot solicit or expect the renewal of your confidence. Still less can I solicit or expect it, if you think that that policy ought to be reversed—if you desire to re-establish the principle of Protection—to restore the duties that have been repealed on cotton, on wool, on meat, on flour, on the long list of imported articles, which are either the materials for domestic manufactures, or enter into general consumption as articles of food.

It is my earnest hope that you will make your choice of a representative exclusively upon public grounds—that you will not permit the consideration of mere personal regard, or of my long connection with you, to influence that choice against your deliberate judgment.

If that deliberate judgment be in favour of the course which I have pursued, and which I propose to pursue, I shall hope for a continuance of your confidence—if it be not, our intercourse in all the relations of private life will not assume a less friendly character, if in the discharge of the trust com-

mitted to you, you should give effect to opinions upon public matters at variance with those which I have expressed.—I have the honour to be, gentlemen, with great esteem, your faithful servant and friend,—ROBERT PEEL.

It is needless to say that this “manifesto” as it was termed by the newspapers of the day, excited a great deal of attention and discussion, in the course of which the premier’s whole political career was analyzed and disputed, often by no friendly hand. It was observed of it, as an omission somewhat remarkable, that in the whole course of this voluminous document, no reference was made to one of the measures which of all others most prominently divided public opinion at the time; namely, the Banking Restriction act of 1844. Equally silent was he upon this subject in his speech to the electors of Tamworth upon his return. It will be sufficient to give a somewhat abridged account of his observations upon this occasion, the last upon which he spoke from the hustings:—

He began by expressing the importance he attached to the maintenance of the electoral privilege by the smaller boroughs, and by Tamworth in particular. He referred to his past life, and boldly asked what high principle of policy he had departed from? When he addressed them before, he told them that he was a loyal and devoted subject of the Queen—that he wished to see every prerogative of the crown preserved. Had he done aught to entrench on those prerogatives? It was true, he had not advised state prosecutions for libel and sedition. He wished to see the power of the crown resting on the contentment and loyalty of the people, and on that affectionate devotion to their Sovereign, which this country would be most ungrateful if it did not manifest to that Queen who now reigned over us. He had always wished that the church should be maintained in its legitimate influence. He wished to see the church gaining on



dissent; but he wished to see her so gaining, by extending her ministry among the people. He did not want to see the church supported by unjust laws, injuriously affecting those who dissented from her doctrines. He thought it perfectly compatible with an affectionate attachment to the church to consult the feelings, the desires, the habits, and the rights of those who dissented from her doctrines. These were the objects of that true Conservative policy which he wished to hold. He wished to see also the House of Lords in possession of its just and due authority. He attached the utmost importance to the maintenance of hereditary nobility. He believed that the aristocracy had done at least as much to vindicate the liberties of England as any other class; and it would be truly destructive of the mixed form of government which we lived under, if the House of Lords should cease to exercise its authority as a branch of the legislature. He wished to discourage the desire for a democratic change in the House of Commons. He did not wish to see such a democratic change as should interfere with the prerogatives of the Crown and the authority of the House of Lords. He had compared this country with others in which a mixed form of government, resting on pure democratic principles, prevailed, and he found that we had a more perfect security for the liberties of the people, for the freedom of the press, for expression of thought, and for action, under a government consisting of an ancient Monarchy, an hereditary House of Lords, and a House of Commons representing, not the majority of the people as told by the head, but the magistracy, the clergy, the great corporate bodies, the intelligence and the wealth, as well as the mere numbers, of the people. He had desired to maintain public credit—to extend commerce—and in what respect had he failed? What injury had he done to any one of the high legitimate objects of Conservative policy? Had the public credit suffered by the

way in which the finances had been administered by him? Had the House of Lords or its influence suffered? Had the Church or its influence suffered? If it had, it had been in consequence of its own internal divisions, and not by any acts of his. Well, then, did they disapprove of the financial policy he had pursued? He then took a survey of his financial policy, and appealed triumphantly to the beneficial effects it had produced. In 1841 he found high duties imposed on the import of flour, while cattle and meat were prohibited. A multitude of other necessities of life, and raw materials of trade and manufactures, were burdened with onerous duties. He reformed all this; and what had been the result? Look to the state of the revenue of the financial year ending the 5th of April, 1847, and compare it with the revenue of the year 1841, putting the income-tax altogether out of the question, and it would be found that, although in the interim £8,000,000 of taxes had been repealed, the revenue of the last year had been £1,000,000 better than that of 1841. But it had been said that we had been blessed with a succession of good harvests, and that, to that circumstance was attributable the prosperity which had followed, and not to his commercial policy. Was the last remarkable for being a good harvest? Why, in that year we were obliged to send £10,000,000 to the support of the Irish people to rescue them from starvation. Was that a good harvest? Was it a good harvest when corn was at 90s. or 100s. a quarter? Last year there was a bad harvest; and what had been the result of the trial of his measures during a bad harvest? During the last year—he could hardly believe the figures when he read them—the revenue had increased by £2,600,000 over that of the preceding year; and of that amount £1,800,000 was an increase in the excise and customs, notwithstanding the enormous reductions which had taken place. But he was glad to hear the argument that

good harvests were the cause of increased revenue? What was that but an admission that cheapness and plenty of food were essential, as well to the happiness of the people, as to the support of the revenue? Was it not evident, therefore, that it was unwise to impede, by legislative restraints, the bounty of Providence? Adverting then to the Corn-laws, Sir Robert said, he rejoiced, as a landed proprietor, that that source of discord had been dried up. It was said that confidence in public men was shaken when they changed their opinions. To a certain extent that was true. It would be better if they all could be so sagacious as to see in mixed political questions what was right, and never to depart from it. But he would tell them what ought rather to shake public confidence in public men—it was when public men had not the courage to change their course when convinced of their error. To change an opinion for the purpose of maintaining power, or for party purposes, was to bring dishonour on a public man; but if he (Sir R. Peel) had changed his opinion, he had changed it in favour of the interests of those who could make him no other return than that of silent gratitude. If he had changed his opinions, he had renounced the good will of the powerful. By a contrary course he could have maintained himself in power; he could have combated the Anti-Corn-Law League for four or five years; and if he had lost power, it was because he had conscientiously believed that the mode by which he could have retained it was injurious to the interests of the empire. Mr. Huskisson, the author of the sliding scale, had changed his opinions on the subject of the Corn-laws more than once. And a statesman for whom he had the greatest respect—the noble lord who had succeeded him in power—had, in the year 1822, severely censured those who laid the foundation for subverting the principles of the Corn-bill altogether, and introducing foreign corn at all times into the market, and said, “That if foreign

corn were admitted, even if we had scarcely any taxes to pay, it would not be easy for the farmers of England, who required to live in a certain degree of respectability and comfort, to compete with the lords of Poland and Russia, whose vassal peasantry were unacquainted with the wants of a civilized state." Yet in 1846, when his attention had been drawn to the potato disease in Ireland, he was of a different opinion. In his letter from Edinburgh, in that year, Lord John Russell said, "the struggle to make bread scarce and dear, when it is clear that part at least of the additional price goes to increase rent, is a struggle deeply injurious to an aristocracy, which (this quarrel once removed) is strong in property, strong in opinion, strong in ancient associations, and the memory of immortal services. Let us, then, unite to put an end to a system which has been proved to be the blight of commerce, the bane of agriculture, the source of bitter divisions among classes, the cause of penury, fever, mortality, and crime, amongst the people." Having dilated to some length on the advantages of free trade amongst nations, illustrated by the free interchange of commodities between towns, the right honourable baronet concluded by a powerful appeal to the principles of free trade, as being far better calculated than the vain glories of war, or the lust of conquest, to promote the happiness and welfare of mankind.

Turning from the ex-minister, and his constituents of the small borough of Tamworth, to the actual premier, and his large commercial constituency of London, we find differences of opinion strongly characteristic of both statesmen. Sir Robert Peel avowed his preference, as a leader of a party, for the suffrages of a small constituency; Lord John Russell, on the other hand, declared to the citizens of London, that he believed nothing would more conduce to the harmony of our constitution, than that persons possessing the confidence of the crown should seek for the suffrages of large



bodies of the people. He could conceive nothing more advantageous to the crown than that persons representing large communities should be able to carry the wishes, the opinions, and the requests of those communities to the foot of the throne.

A further contrast became apparent between the cases of these two statesmen, in some other passages of the noble lord's speech. Whilst Sir Robert Peel had the up-hill, and not very gracious task before him, of avowing successive changes of opinion, and justifying successive changes of policy,—which he did successfully, at least with reference to the all-important considerations of public utility and justice,—Lord John Russell took pride to proclaim the uniform consistency of his views upon these very subjects; though, at the same time, the admission became inevitable, that, barring one important exception, with all the will, he had not had the power to operate the changes to which, through a long and active political career, his opinions had been wedded :-

“From the beginning of my political life,” he said, “I have always followed that great doctrine of Mr. Fox, that acts, and not opinions, ought to be the subject of punishment.” “It was upon that ground—taking my stand upon that principle—that, now near twenty years back, I proposed to the House of Commons the abrogation of those civil disqualifications which barred the way to office to Protestant Dissenters.” “I remember declaring in this room, that I thought if a weaver in Lancashire produced a piece of cloth, and a husbandman on the banks of the Ohio grew a quarter of wheat, these two men ought to be at liberty to exchange their respective products, and that no law ought to prevent such an interchange. The principle which I asserted here in 1841 I proposed in the House of Commons in 1842. As in former days, I have had the honour



THE LIFE OF THE LATE

*P. J. F.*

BY THE REV. J. J. F.



of opening to Manchester, to Leeds, to Birmingham, and to a vast proportion of the householders of this country, the power of the franchise, while, at the same time, I succeeded in disfranchising Gatton, Old Sarum, and other seats of corruption. In the same spirit I hope in future, if I should be elected by your suffrages, to promote the best interests of this empire."

The result of the elections in all parts of the country showed a vast preponderance of public opinion in favour of the great measure of Free Trade; so vast and unmistakeable, that it may be sufficient to dismiss the subject by stating the simple fact, that, upon balancing the returns at the close of the election, it was found that, of Whig and liberal Free Trade candidates, 337 had been returned; whilst, of the Conservatives and Protectionists combined, there were 318, of whom about half only were of the character of pure Protectionists. Amongst the remarkable events of the general election, was the return of Baron Rothschild, a Hebrew, as one of the representatives for the City of London; an event which led, at a future time, to very interesting debates, and to declarations of opinion on the part of Sir Robert Peel, which justified the confidence felt in him by all moderate politicians.

The interval between the election and assembling of the new parliament was marked with many circumstances of a character to occasion uneasiness, not to say alarm, in the public mind, and to impose heavy and anxious responsibility upon the advisers of the crown. It was hardly to be supposed that a period of suffering, like that of the preceding winter and spring, and the extraordinary measures which had been resorted to, to mitigate the terrors of a calamity overwhelming the energies of the whole Irish population, should leave no seeds of evil for the coming year. In truth, the symptoms of the disease were only alleviated for a time,



by our expensive and laborious ministration. Its causes still remained unsubdued, and as the winter of 1847 approached, they broke out again into active operation, and with a violence increased by the unavoidable disadvantages attendant upon an exceptional course of treatment, at variance with the natural rules of social economy. Although the grain-harvests in Ireland, as in other parts of the kingdom, were most abundant; as much could not be said for the potato crops, the staple food of the great bulk of the poorer population. Disease and misery pervaded the land; and, in many instances, overcrowded the workhouses to the extent of double the number of inmates they had been intended to accommodate. Contemporaneously with this growing pauperism, the land-owners of many extensive properties commenced a system of eviction of tenantry, which amounted to the depopulation of whole districts. The natural consequence of this unhappy state of things was a succession of alarming outrages; workhouses attacked; the levying of rents forcibly resisted; armed parties of desperate and lawless men patrolling the land; and murders of the most cold-blooded character of daily occurrence, often in the broad light of day. The columns of the newspapers of the time were filled with details of these shocking occurrences, to an extent never perhaps known before, even in the history of that unhappy country.

Meantime, trouble and distress of a different sort showed themselves on this side of the Channel, and threatened to prostrate the great fabric of British credit. The financial panic, which had casually occupied attention towards the close of the session, but without leading to any legislative act, had, as already stated, somewhat abated about the period referred to, and strong hopes were entertained that the worst was over, and that things would gradually improve. These hopes, however, were doomed to be disappointed; and it is

a singular fact, worthy of remark, that the immediate causes of the relapse-panic of the autumn of 1847, were diametrically opposite to those of the earlier panic of the spring and summer of that year. The one, indeed, was consequent upon the other; but only upon the principle of re-action, for the very circumstance which tended to ease the commercial distress at midsummer, namely, the fall of some 15s. in the price of corn, when followed by repeated declines in the same commodity, brought overwhelming embarrassment upon many who had speculated to a large extent for future supplies of that commodity, at prices which were excessively beyond what eventually became the market-price of the day. A "tightness" in the money-market, therefore, at once became imminent, and was first notified by the Directors of the Bank of England, who, on the 5th of August, raised their minimum rate of discount to  $5\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. Although in the next month they reduced their rate to 5 per cent., the effect upon the money-market, once experienced, was not to be got rid of; a warning was given, which was not neglected. The immediate effect of the notice of the 5th of August, was to throw the funds down 2 per cent., consols falling  $88\frac{5}{8}$  to  $86\frac{3}{4}$  in the course of a week; and exchequer bills being scarcely saleable at par. Meantime, wheat, which had stood at 100—115 in the middle of May, had progressively fallen to 60—70; and Indian corn, in which very large engagements had been made, fell from 60—70, to 30—34; whilst favourable advices from America, and the prospects of an abundant harvest at home, showed that a still further decline was inevitable. The consequence of this state of things was, that, early in August, several corn speculators failed for considerable sums; these were followed by merchants of a larger class and more extensive relations; and before the end of the month, failures to the extent of £3,000,000 sterling had been announced. The

tide having once set in, flowed with increasing force, spreading havoc and dismay on all sides, and involved at length several houses of old standing and the highest repute in the East Indian and Colonial trades. Confidence for a time seemed to be utterly destroyed.

This state of embarrassment was still further aggravated by the policy of the Directors of the Bank of England, who, on the 1st of October, announced that they would not make any further advances on the security of stock, and raised the rate of interest upon short loans to a minimum of  $5\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. This notification took many persons, who had contemplated raising money upon stock, by surprise; the greatest excitement and consternation prevailed upon the Stock Exchange, and consols immediately fell from  $85\frac{3}{8}$  to  $84\frac{7}{8}$  for money, and from  $85\frac{1}{2}$  to  $84\frac{1}{2}$ —85 for the account; and they fell to  $83\frac{1}{2}$  three days afterwards, and to  $80\frac{1}{2}$  in the following week. A significant proof of the peculiar nature of the crisis, the intense demand for money, and the feverish state of the money-market, is found in the fact, that, on the 19th of October, consols were sold for money at 78, and for the account at  $79\frac{1}{2}$ . Meantime, exchequer-bills, (£1,000,) had fallen as low as 30 per cent. discount. The gold bullion in the Bank of England had fallen at this period to £6,899,485.

Affairs had now arrived at a "crisis." It was no longer the case of individual mercantile houses, or stock-exchange brokers; but banking establishments of provincial if not national connection and influence, were forced by the storm to close their doors. The Royal Bank of Liverpool suspended its payments on the 18th October, the Mercantile Union Bank on the 21st, and many smaller banking establishments did the like about the same period. On the 19th a deputation of bankers, merchants, and ship-owners of Liverpool, waited upon the premier with a memo-

rial, praying "that the government would immediately adopt measures to relieve the pressure which weighed so heavily on the commercial classes of the community;" and, on the 23rd, their appeal was followed up by one made by a deputation from bankers, merchants, &c., of the City of London. These appeals, (similar ones having previously been made in vain,) were at length successful. On Monday, the 25th October, the Premier, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, addressed a joint note to the governor and deputy-governor of the Bank of England, which virtually authorized them to depart from the restrictive enactments of the act of 1844, under promise of an act of indemnity in case of their doing so. This important letter ran as follows :—

" Downing-street, October 25th, 1847.

" Gentlemen,—Her Majesty's government have seen, with the deepest regret, the pressure which has existed for some weeks upon the commercial interests of the country, and that this pressure has been aggravated by a want of that confidence which is necessary for carrying on the ordinary dealings of trade.

" They have been in hopes that the check given to transactions of a speculative character, the transfer of capital from other countries, the influx of bullion, and the feeling which a knowledge of these circumstances might have been expected to produce, would have removed the prevailing distrust.

" They were encouraged in this expectation by the speedy cessation of a similar state of feeling in the month of April last.

" These hopes, however, have been disappointed, and her Majesty's government have come to the conclusion that the time has arrived when they ought to attempt, by some extraordinary and temporary measure, to restore confidence to the mercantile and manufacturing community.



“ For this purpose, they reecomend to the Directors of the Bank of England, in the present emergency, to enlarge the amount of their discounts and advancees upon approved security ; but that, in order to retain this operation within reasonable limits, a high rate of interest should be charged. In present circumstanees, they would suggest that the rate of interest should not be less than eight per cent.

“ If this course should lead to any infringement of the existing law, her Majesty’s government will be prepared to propose to parliament, on its meeting, a bill of indemnity.

“ They will rely upon the discretion of the Directors to reduce, as soon as possible, the amount of their notes, if any extraordinary issues should take place within the limits prescribed by law.

“ Her Majesty’s government are of opinion that any extra profit derived from this measure should be carried to the account of the public, but the precise mode of doing so must be left to future arrangement.

“ Her Majesty’s government are not insensible to the evil of any departure from the law which has placed the currency of this country upon a sound basis ; but they feel confident that, in the present circumstances, the measure which they have proposed may be safely adopted ; and that, at the same time, the main provisions of that law and the vital principle of preserving the convertibility of the bank-note may be firmly maintained.—We have the honour to be, gentlemen, your obedient humble servants,

(Signed)

“ JOHN RUSSELL.

“ CHAS. WOOD.

“ The Governor and Deputy-Governor of  
the Bank of England.”

In conformity with the suggestions contained in this communication, the Governor of the Bank immediately issued the following notice :—

## "BANK RESOLUTION.

"Resolved,—That this Court do accede to the recommendation contained in the letter from the First Lord of the Treasury and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, dated this day, and addressed to the Governor and Deputy-Governor of the Bank of England, which has been read.

"That the *minimum* rate of discount on bills not having more than 95 days to run be 8 per cent.

"That advances be made on Bills of Exchange, Stock, Exchequer Bills, and other approved securities, in sums of not less than £2,000, and for periods to be fixed by the governors, at the rate of 8 per cent. per annum."

The immediate effect of this announcement was more of a moral kind than otherwise. It tended to inspire hope in the depths of despair. Practically, it might, at the outset, have been pronounced a dead letter; for the very notion of borrowing money at a minimum of 8 per cent. seemed inconsistent with any idea of affording "relief" in commercial relations. As might have been anticipated, the liberal offer of the Bank directors was so sparingly availed of, that they actually never did overstep the limits of accommodation relatively to the bullion deposits and securities provided by their charter. Nevertheless, as has been stated, though actually the Bank resolutions afforded no "relief" to any one, it afforded satisfaction, for the moment, to all. Before the close of the next day, the funds experienced a rise of 5 per cent. upon the lowest quotations of the Saturday previous; although they afterwards experienced a slight re-action in consequence of intelligence of fresh failures which had been received from the country. But it is not necessary to enter into further details of the history of this critical period. Having noticed the principal events in the order in which they occurred, we shall leave the further exposition of their tendency, and the light in which they were

viewed by those in influential positions, to be developed in the debates which very shortly afterwards took place in parliament.

Before quitting the narrative of the social condition of the country, it will be interesting to take a glance at the revenue returns of this eventful period, as an important element in considering the true bearings of the case. The quarter's return for July was far more satisfactory than might have been expected considering the severity of the crisis through which the country had just passed. It exhibited a net income upon the year of upwards of £1,000,000, and upon the quarter of £41,000. The customs alone showed an increase of £1,103,087, and the excise of £708,686 on the year. On the other hand, the October quarter showed an income of £1,042,000 on the year, and of £1,509,000 on the quarter ; sufficient evidence of a re-action which was affecting all ranks of society.

The new parliament assembled on the 18th November ; on Tuesday the 23rd the business of the session was formally opened with the following speech from the throne, delivered by commission :—

“ My Lords, and Gentlemen—

“ Her Majesty has ordered us to declare to you the causes which have induced her to call parliament together at the present time.

“ Her Majesty has seen with great concern the distress which has for some time prevailed among the commercial classes. The embarrassments of trade were at one period aggravated by so general a feeling of distrust and of alarm, that her Majesty, for the purpose of restoring confidence, authorized her ministers to recommend to the Directors of the Bank of England, a course of proceeding suited to such an emergency. This course might have led to an infringement of the law.

“ Her Majesty has great satisfaction in being able to inform you that the law has not been infringed—that the alarm has subsided—and that the pressure on the banking and commercial interests has been mitigated.

“ The abundant harvest with which this country has been blessed, has alleviated the evils which always accompany a want of employment in the manufacturing districts.

“ Her Majesty has, however, to lament the recurrence of severe distress in Ireland, owing to the scarcity of the usual food of the people.

“ Her Majesty trusts that this distress will be materially relieved by the exertions which have been made to carry into effect the law of last session for the support of the destitute poor. Her Majesty has learnt with satisfaction that landed proprietors have taken advantage of the means placed at their disposal by the liberality of parliament, for the improvement of land.

“ Her Majesty laments that in some counties of Ireland atrocious crimes have been committed, and a spirit of insubordination has manifested itself, leading to an organized resistance to legal rights.

“ The Lord-Lieutenant has employed, with vigour and energy, the means which the law places at his disposal, to detect offenders, and to prevent the repetition of offences. Her Majesty feels it, however, to be her duty to her peaceable and well-disposed subjects, to ask the assistance of parliament in taking further precautions against the perpetration of crime in certain counties and districts of Ireland.

“ Her Majesty views with the deepest anxiety and interest the present condition of Ireland, and she recommends to the consideration of parliament, measures, which, with due regard to the rights of property, may advance the social condition of the people, and tend to the permanent improvement of that part of the United Kingdom.



“ Her Majesty has seen with great concern the breaking out of civil war in Switzerland.

“ Her Majesty is in communication with her Allies on this subject, and has expressed her readiness to use, in concert with them, her friendly influence, for the purpose of restoring to the Swiss Confederation the blessings of peace.

“ Her Majesty looks with confidence to the maintenance of the general peace of Europe.

“ Her Majesty has concluded with the Republic of the Ecuador a treaty for the suppression of the slave-trade. Her Majesty has given directions that this treaty should be laid before you.

“ Gentlemen of the House of Commons—

“ Her Majesty has given directions that the estimates for the next year should be prepared, for the purpose of being laid before you. They will be framed with a careful regard to the exigencies of the public service.

“ My Lords, and Gentlemen—

“ Her Majesty recommends to the consideration of parliament, the laws which regulate the navigation of the United Kingdom, with a view to ascertain whether any changes can be adopted, which, without danger to our maritime strength, may promote the commercial and colonial interests of the empire.

“ Her Majesty has thought proper to appoint a commission to report on the best means of improving the health of the metropolis ; and her Majesty recommends to your earnest attention, such measures as will be laid before you relating to the public health.

“ Her Majesty has deeply sympathized with the sufferings which afflict the labouring classes in the manufacturing districts of Great Britain, and in many parts of Ireland ; and her Majesty has observed with admiration the patience with which these sufferings have been generally borne.

“The distress which has prevailed among the commercial classes has affected many important branches of the revenue. But her Majesty trusts that the time is not distant when, under the blessings of Divine Providence, the commerce and industry of the United Kingdom will have resumed their wonted activity.”

The state of Ireland, and the financial crisis, formed prominent features in the above speech, and divided the attention of the speakers on the address, which in both Houses was carried without amendment. We shall briefly record what occurred in reference to both of these subjects.

On the 29th November Sir G. Grey moved for leave to bring in a bill for the prevention of crime and outrage in certain districts of Ireland. He observed “that he did so with feelings of deep regret, but in the discharge of what he conceived to be an imperative duty. In consequence of the unfortunate calamity, of a want of provisions, with which Ireland had been visited in the year 1846 and 1847, the government had felt it to be its duty to propose to parliament, measures calculated to mitigate the distress, and arrest the progress of the famine and disease that were rapidly spreading throughout the country. Parliament cheerfully responded to the appeal, and various acts were passed calculated to effect these objects by relieving the immediate and pressing necessities of the people, and enabling the landowners to improve their lands and employ the people. Acts were also passed for the permanent relief of the destitute poor in Ireland; and if they could only secure the co-operation of all classes of society in carrying out the objects of the legislature, he was not prepared to abandon the hope that the beneficial results anticipated from these measures might yet be realized. The cases to which he would refer applied to only a small portion of Ireland, and he rejoiced to say,

that in the greater portion of that country, life and property were just as safe as in any other part of the empire.

“The general result of the criminal statistics furnished by the constabulary, showed a great diminution as compared with former periods; and taking the month of October 1847 as compared with October 1846, there had been a diminution of the ordinary class of offencees, of one-third. The bill proposed would apply only to those districts in which crime of a peculiar character existed, in which there was a secret conspiracy against the rights of property, and in which every man was doomed who dared to exercise those rights. The crime to which he adverted had not developed itself in those districts of Ireland in which distress was the greatest; on the contrary, there was not even the shadow of a pretext for these fearful crimes, or any ground for the supposition that the people might be driven to their perpetration by starvation and distress. As regarded the proposed measure, he did not pretend that it would be any cure for the many evils that afflicted Ireland—it would be very short-sighted policy of any government, to suppose that the prevention of crime by police regulations would be sufficient. A wise government would look to causes rather than to symptoms, and he believed that the real cure for those evils would be found in the faithful and zealous discharge of their duties by all classes, from the highest to the lowest. Referring to the criminal statistics of Ireland for the six months ending October 1846 and October 1847, under the heads of homicide, attempts at homicide by firing at the person, robbery of fire-arms, and firing in dwelling-houses, he showed that, in the latter period, there had been a considerable increase in this class of crimes; and taking the month of October alone, there had been perpetrated of these four descriptions of crime 195 cases, of which 139 were committed in the three counties of Clare, Limerick, and Tipperary. It was only to

districts in which crime prevailed to an alarming extent, that the provisions of his bill were meant to apply, and he should detail to the House some proof of the appalling cases that had taken place in Ireland—murders of the most daring and atrocious character, and which were in almost every instance followed by the perfect impunity of the assassins. After going through a lengthened catalogue of the murders and other outrages which had occurred within the previous two months, Sir George Grey pointed out the powers which the Lord Lieutenant actually possessed for the repression of crime, observing, that he believed all parties would admit that Lord Clarendon had discharged his important and responsible duties with vigour and efficiency. It was not his intention to ask for any general bill for the whole of Ireland; he merely proposed that it should be applied, at the discretion of the Lord Lieutenant, to such districts as were characterized by an extraordinary amount of crime. The first clause would empower the Lord Lieutenant, with the advice of his privy council, wherever in his opinion it might appear necessary for the prevention of crime and outrage, to issue a proclamation that the provisions of the act should, from and after a certain day, apply to the district. The definition of the extent of the district would be in the discretion of the Lord Lieutenant. The second clause provided for the posting-up copies of the proclamation, and an abstract of the provisions of the act, throughout the proclaimed district. The third clause gave the Lord Lieutenant power to send any additional number of constabulary he might deem necessary, into the disturbed district. He proposed to increase the reserved constabulary force at the disposal of the Lord Lieutenant from 400 to 600; and that wherever an increased number of police were required for the suppression of crime and the protection of the public, the whole expense of that additional number should be borne by the district. The



payment was not to be postponed to a remote period, as in ordinary cases, but an estimate of the charge for three months was to be made out and levied immediately upon the district. At the expiration of that period, if the services of the police were still required, a further levy to the same amount would be made. With regard to the repression of the use and purchase of fire-arms, he proposed that there should be a general prohibition within the proclaimed district, irrespective of rank or amount of rating, with the exceptions enumerated in the bill. He proposed a general prohibition to carry or have fire-arms within the district, elsewhere than in a dwelling-house, under a penalty of imprisonment for any term not exceeding two years. The exceptions he proposed, were justices of the peace, persons in her Majesty's naval and military service, in the coast-guard or revenue service, in the police or constabulary, special constables, or persons duly licensed to kill game. There were also persons who were compelled to be abroad in the discharge of their duties, such as poor-rate collectors, and these men would necessarily require to be armed for their protection. A person to be named by the Lord Lieutenant, and unconnected with the local magistracy, would be empowered to grant licenses in these exceptional cases. The police would also be empowered to apprehend and search all suspicious persons. He was not of opinion that the same absolute prohibition should be carried out with regard to persons having arms in their houses, as many of the small farmers had procured arms for the purpose of defending themselves; but in certain cases the Lord Lieutenant would have the power to issue a notice which would be applicable to the whole, or part of a district; calling upon all persons not included in these exceptions to deliver up their arms at the nearest police station; and all persons detaining them after such notice, should be deemed guilty of a misdemeanour. A power would also be given to search

the houses of persons suspected of concealing fire-arms ; such search only to take place during the day-time. Power was also given to call upon all persons between the ages of 16 and 60, to assist in the prevention of crime and the arrest of the offenders ; and any neglect or refusal would subject the party to imprisonment for any term not exceeding two years. After enumerating some smaller matters of detail, the right honourable gentleman called upon the House to give him its support in carrying through a measure, which, in the circumstances of Ireland, he considered to be absolutely required ; and concluded by moving for leave to bring in his bill.

The appeal of the right honourable baronet met with the general sympathy of the House ; the only unconditional opponents being Mr. Feargus O'Connor, and Mr. Fagan of Cork. Mr. Wakley met the motion with an amendment, to the effect, that it was not just to the people of Ireland to enact a coercive measure, without, at the same time, bringing forward such measures as would tend to their permanent relief. This amendment only met with the support of 20 votes against 233, and the main question for bringing in the bill was carried by 224 to 18. Sir Robert Peel gave his cordial support to the measure in a brief speech, in which he did not omit the opportunity of reminding the House of the less generous manner in which he had been treated when endeavouring to legislate upon the same subject some few years previously :—

“ He said he should be unwilling to permit the first night of the debate on this proposal of her Majesty’s government to pass without taking that earliest opportunity of publicly declaring that it was his intention to give it his cordial support. He could not resist the force of the appeal which the right honourable gentleman had made to that House. The right honourable gentleman had told them that her Majesty, in her speech from the throne, had recommended them to

take into consideration the state of Ireland, with reference to the prevalence there of atrocious crimes, to the impunity of the offenders, and to the inadequacy of the ordinary law to give protection to life and property. The right honourable gentleman had rightly stated that the House, without committing itself to the details of any particular measure, by a unanimous address to the throne, had conveyed an assurance that it would take the subject into its immediate consideration. The right honourable gentleman had also truly stated, that the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland and her Majesty's government at home, they who had the heavy responsibility of giving protection to the faithful subjects of her Majesty in Ireland, considered the ordinary law to be imperfect to this great end, under the existing circumstances, and therefore, on their responsibility, demanded additional powers. The right honourable gentleman had fortified that statement, resting it first solely on the authority of the government, by details of crime which could leave no doubt on the mind of any man that it was the duty of parliament without delay to attempt, at least, to resist the progress of one of the most sanguinary tyrannies that ever disgraced a country having any claim whatever to the appellation of civilized. He was sure that the right honourable gentleman and his colleagues must feel that he could not resist the force of their appeal, for it was precisely the same appeal that, some years since, he had made, but in vain, to them.

“ Let him not be misunderstood : it was not his opinion at all that measures of this kind would operate as a remedy for the social evils of Ireland. He fully admitted the justice of the remark, that the measure could not be so regarded. It had been always with the greatest reluctance that he had consented to propose or to support such measures ; for he had ever felt that they were attended with the result of diminishing the public confidence in the

efficacy of the ordinary law; and consequently, of paralyzing, to a great degree, the operation of that ordinary law. But still, when he heard from the responsible advisers of government a statement, confirmed by evidence, that there existed in Ireland a wide conspiracy for the assassination, without regard to age, sex, property, or condition, of her Majesty's faithful and unoffending subjects, he regarded the fact of this evil as a public scandal, overcoming all the minor objections which he might entertain to the reception of the measure. Therefore he would say, that, though he viewed the measure as no remedy for the social evils of Ireland, yet he, for one, would not consent to postpone its consideration until other measures, which might apply such a remedy, should be brought forward. He would enter into no parley or negotiation with these assassins.

"It was the primary duty of the House, if they wished to lay the foundation of permanent improvement in Ireland, to secure the lives of her Majesty's faithful and loyal subjects; they must first of all paralyze the arm of the assassin. This done, their duty to Ireland—as a part of the empire which should be as dear to them as England—would necessitate their deliberate consideration of permanent measures, alleviating, and by degrees removing, the social evils of that country. It was a matter, indeed, affecting our own direct interest, for there was no evil in the social condition of Ireland which did not produce its reaction upon the condition of the people of this country, upon their property and their happiness.

"While, however, he cordially advocated the earliest possible adoption of permanent and remedial measures, he would caution the country against the conception of an idea that there would ensue any immediate effects from such measures. The power of no legislation would be ade-



quate to the immediate removal of evils of such long duration. Take the measures which had generally been proposed ; take emigration—the object of which was to transfer the surplus population to some one of our colonies which required their labour. If they addressed themselves to this subject, they would at once see the difficulty of transferring any part of the population of Ireland, which should be sufficient to tell on the state of society there, to any colony, without great expense and great inconvenience. Then the improvement in the relations of landlord and tenant. The honourable gentleman, (Mr. Poulett Scrope,) who had directed much of his attention to that subject, had dwelt on the good effect of the tenant-right as it existed in the province of Ulster. But there might be other causes for the distinction between the state of society in the north as compared with the south of Ireland, besides tenant-right. Let not the honourable gentleman rush to the conclusion, that the introduction of the same usage into the south, with regard to tenure of land, as existed in the north, would at once produce the same condition of society in Munster as prevailed in Ulster.

“ Another honourable gentleman, the member for Rochdale, (Mr. Sharman Crawford,) who himself set an example in dealing with his tenants, which other landlords would do well to follow, had also advocated the same principle. He (Sir Robert Peel) admitted the justice of that principle. He thought it right, where the tenant had to bear, as in Ireland, expenses in providing the necessary farm buildings, which he was not called upon to bear in England—he admitted, that when the tenant had improved his property, he should have some guaranty against the mere caprice of his landlord. But then it had been contended that evening, that the application of the tenant-right of Ulster would be no protection ; that they must go further,

and give to the tenant the right to sell his occupancy without reference to the landlord. Such a measure, so far from permanently improving the condition of the tenant, would, he thought, merely purchase a temporary quiet for the space of some few months, on the part of those only who would be immediately benefited by it, while it would do much to shake confidence, diminish the stimulus to improvement in both landlord and tenant, and lead to a confiscation (and that without an object) of the rights of the landlord. Such a measure, he felt convinced, would be as fatal to the well-understood interests of the tenantry, as of the proprietor. His opinion was, that in principle there should be no distinction in our laws in respect to tenures in England and Ireland. Here, we admitted the principle, that a tenant who improved his land ought not to be dispossessed, and compelled to forfeit what he had laid out in improvements, at the mere caprice of the landlord, without compensation. That principle was just to England, and he thought it was equally so to Ireland. But when they came to apply it generally to Ireland, they found they could not approach it, to discuss it, without being met with difficulties on every side.

“ Last year it was generally concurred in, that the principle which prevailed in Lincolnshire, and had there been long established—that the right, which he did not know if the law recognized, but which the landlord there did—the right of the tenant to compensation for unexhausted improvements made by him upon his land, was a just principle; but when the attempt was made to introduce that principle throughout England, they were all aware of the great difficulties with which the proposition was opposed. In the same way as to Ireland: to say that the tenant should have a right to recover, as against his landlord, for every improvement made by him—though he admitted the

justice of the principle, speaking of *bonâ fide* improvements made by the tenant, and though he should rejoice if it could be embodied in some act of parliament—was so difficult a subject, that it should teach them not to be too sanguine as to the result of any such measure. So as to many other measures deeply connected with the social state of Ireland, though he was fully aware of the importance of the early consideration of those measures by parliament, he was not sanguine enough to hope—whatever permanent good they might hope would result from them—that such good effects could result immediately. But on no account would he wait for the introduction of such measures at the present time. He would take immediately the steps necessary to put a stop to the work of the assassin—to put down the terrors of assassination—he would enter into no negotiation with those who were parties to that assassination.

“It was by no means his intention, in giving his support to her Majesty’s government, to refer to the bygone events of 1846. It had been said, that it was due to the late government, because such a measure was successfully opposed by those now in office when introduced by them, to assist them in opposing the bill. He could assure honourable gentlemen, that the best reparation they could make to the late government was to pass this law, if they thought it necessary. But he claimed no reparation. He spoke for himself, that so far from wishing to see the passing of this measure resisted as a sort of triumph for the late government, he disclaimed all such triumph. He looked upon the state of society in Ireland as the prominent consideration, and all party disputes and squabbles as utterly unworthy. There were some honourable gentlemen who considered the present measure not sufficiently stringent. The decision of the government in this respect, he thought,

should be almost final. He did not wish to see a popular assembly engaged in forcing upon a government measures of coercion which they did not themselves deem necessary to bring forward. The government thought they would be able to cope with the evil by means of this measure, and, that being the case, he should be most unwilling to propose that they should take powers authorizing a still further departure from the constitution."

After examining some of the details of the proposed measure, Sir Robert Peel observed :—

" In certain districts named by the Lord Lieutenant, the inhabitants might be wholly, or partially, disarmed, domiciliary visits might be instituted, and all persons, except those specially named, might be deprived of the possession of arms. He feared that, in some of the disturbed districts, to have an indiscriminate disarming would materially diminish the means of lawful defence. If persons of the lower and middle classes were to be prevented from retaining arms honestly and legally, for the purpose of offering that resistance which was the most effectual check to the invasion of the public peace, he did not think the law would be effectual as a protection to life. Then in certain districts the possession of arms would be prohibited, but in the adjoining district arms might be possessed indiscriminately, and even paraded before the constabulary. There were many districts in Ireland, in which, though numerous murders did not take place, that was no justification for permitting the perfect possession of arms, and in which the state of society might be almost as bad as in the proclaimed district. He thought it would be better to have a general arms act, and he hoped the right honourable gentleman would not altogether abandon the idea of an arms act. He would not say the bill of the right honourable gentleman would be inefficacious, but if he should have reason to believe it so some



time after it had been in operation, he trusted that the right honourable gentleman would not suffer any fear of taunt to prevent him from applying to parliament for additional powers. His belief was, that there were certain districts in Ireland subject to those great causes which led to the disorganization of society, in which crime was almost hereditary, and in which this bill would not prove efficacious. He had himself, in 1814, to detail exactly similar cases of organized conspiracy. In one instance, three men were hired by a person of some respectability to assassinate a magistrate near Clonmel, and they did so, their reward being two guineas each. The government offered a reward of £2,000 for information and conviction, and the very man who had himself employed the assassins informed on them, had them convicted, and claimed the reward of £2,000, which the government was obliged to pay him. And here he must observe, that nothing was more unjust than to judge of the disposition of Ireland from the iniquities of particular districts. In the great towns the people seemed to be even more submissive to the laws than the people of this country; while in the agricultural parts they were certainly more patient and resigned under the affliction of poverty and want. Nothing, then, could be more unjust than to judge of Ireland by those districts which were marked by crime. But he doubted the efficacy in those districts of a temporary law. He thought they should be subjected to a permanent discipline. He would not inflict large penalties for unconstitutional acts, but he would introduce new police regulations, and adopt the strictest registering of every person, and subject the districts to the payment of the expenses of these measures. He thought also that they must have a detective as well as a protecting police force, and that they should give some assurance to witnesses who aided in bringing offenders to justice, that they

would have a solid protection, and not be doomed to death or utter ruin. Sending men to Canada was not sufficient, for, owing to the facilities of communication, they could not give them full protection there. These were subjects which appeared to him worthy of the consideration of her Majesty's government. He thought that an immediate measure against murder and conspiracy to murder was most urgent. He should quarrel with none of the details of that brought forward by the right honourable gentleman; he should, on the contrary, give it his cordial support; and he trusted, that those who opposed the bill of 1846, would not be influenced by their feelings towards the late government, in refusing their support to the present measure."

No feature of interest marked the future stages of the bill, which were carried by large majorities, in the face of the steady, if not rancorous opposition, of a small section of the House. It was sent up to the House of Lords on the 13th of December, by whom it was read a third time, and passed on the 17th.

The subject of the Commercial Distress was brought forward in the House of Commons on the 30th November by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and in the House of Lords on the 2nd December by the Marquis of Lansdowne; the course proposed by each being the appointment of committees of the respective branches of the legislature, "to inquire into the causes of the recent commercial distress, and how far it had been affected by the law for regulating the issue of bank-notes payable on demand."

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, in opening his speech, said he wished to avail himself of that opportunity, of stating the views entertained by the government, as to the causes of the recent panic, and assured the House that it was owing to no unwillingness on his part, that this statement had not been made at an earlier period. He was aware that the

government had been blamed by the supporters of the act of 1844, for having in any way departed from its principles, while those who disapproved of it ascribed the calamities that had befallen trade and commerce almost entirely to its operation. For his part he believed that, so far as human wisdom could guide them, the Banking act of 1844 embraced those principles which were best calculated to regulate the monetary concerns of the country ; although he was not prepared to say that in all seasons, and at all times, and under all circumstances, it could be carried fully into effect. For instance, in a time of general panic and alarm, neither the act of 1844, nor any other legislative measure, would be able effectually to meet and put it down. Even the depreciation of the currency, as in 1819, which some gentlemen had recommended, would have been no security against the late panic ; its only effect would have been to enable the debtor to cheat his creditor. He did not believe that any modification of the act of 1844, nor of any previous system under which their banking and commercial affairs were regulated, could have provided against the panic and distress of the last few months ; and in this opinion he was supported by Mr. Jones Loyd, to whose pamphlet on the subject the right honourable gentleman referred. It appeared to him that the causes of the late pressure were much more deeply seated than the mere issue of a million or two of bank-notes, and those who attributed it to such a cause knew little of the gravity of the subject. What he believed to be the cause of the pressure, was, that there began, in the summer of 1846, an unexampled and unprecedented drain upon the available capital of the country, partly for the purchase of corn, and partly for permanent investment in railroads, and that this acted upon a state of credit most unduly developed beyond all legitimate bounds, the capital being wholly inadequate to the superstructure of credit which was raised upon it. He had little doubt that

they might have been able to withstand the drain from either one or the other of these causes, but it was impossible they could have sustained both together. In the year 1837 they had severe commercial pressure, and in the year 1839 they had the severest drain for the payment of corn that this country had previously sustained; but one of these causes had ceased to operate before the other had commenced, and the pressure was comparatively slight. The amount of accommodation was certainly no measure of the extent of the distress; but it appeared that on the 1st October, 1839, the circulation of the Bank, including post-bills, amounted to £16,800,000, while on the 2d October, 1847, it was £19,577,000. The private securities held by the Bank in the former period was £13,290,000, while at the latter period it was £21,260,000. In the former period, however, there had been no panic, because trade was upon a sound and healthy footing; in the autumn of the present year, on the contrary, they had a panic, and great commercial distress; not because they could not procure notes—not because the Bank did not afford accommodation—but because trade was not in a sound and healthy condition. The right honourable gentleman, in proceeding to observe upon the state of almost unlimited expansion of credit that prevailed in 1846, stated, that the harvest of that year failed, and that there arose a great demand for corn. It became necessary to import largely to feed the people, and then the increased demand for railroad capital took place. That state of things prevailed throughout the autumn; and up to January, 1847, no steps were taken either by the Bank of England or any other party, to meet the approaching evil. The drain of capital for corn and railroads increased rapidly, the Bank raised its rate of interest, and then came the sudden pressure and the panic. That was mainly owing to the imprudence of the Bank, which had lent out the balances



lying in its hands for the payment of the dividends, so that they were not able to obtain them back when these dividends became due. The Bank had pulled up as suddenly as it had let out; and this, connected with the then state of the exchequer-bill market, produced considerable alarm. The first great failure, that of Lesley and Alexander, took place on the 16th August; and he would observe, that the great bulk of these failures were those of houses engaged in the corn trade, and these failures were mainly to be attributed to the sudden fall in the price of corn, and all those who had speculated in that commodity, and had miscalculated, paid the penalty. The failures continued throughout the month of September; but there was still no deficiency in the amount of notes in circulation; and he would observe, that during the whole of the pressure, the Bank of England never refused to discount any bill which came within its rules, and which in ordinary times would have been discounted; it merely charged a higher rate of interest. The right honourable gentleman then proceeded to show that it was owing to the abstraction of capital alone that the panic had taken place. In the six months ending January, 1847, the amount paid for foreign corn was £5,139,000; in the six months ending July, 1847, the amount was £14,184,000; and in the three months just past, it had reached the enormous amount of £14,240,000, being upwards of £33,000,000 in 15 months. When to that was added the drain for railways, to which he had referred on a previous evening, he thought the House would see in this a satisfactory explanation of the pressure that had taken place. After referring to the failure of the Royal Bank of Liverpool, the stoppage of mills in the manufacturing districts for want of specie, and other indications of increasing pressure, the right honourable gentleman observed, that the government had at last most unwillingly come to the conclusion that it was necessary to interfere.

He then noticed briefly the various suggestions that were made, and the grounds that had influenced the government in rejecting them, and in adopting the course they had taken. He spoke with confidence of the signs of improvement that were exhibiting themselves in every quarter, and expressed a hope that by prudence and caution, trade would steadily, slowly, and surely revive, and restore its former supremacy to British commerce. After intimating that the present position of the Bank was such, that the government did not think it necessary to propose any measure to parliament during the present session, he concluded by moving the appointment of the committee.

Mr. James Wilson moved an amendment, the object of which was to limit the inquiries of the committee to the operations of the Bank act of 1844; but as this amendment was subsequently withdrawn, it may be sufficient merely to notice the fact.

At the adjourned debate, on December 3d, Lord John Russell made a speech in defence of the general operation of the Bank act, and of the conduct of government; in the course of which he took a calm review of the peculiar circumstances which had affected the money-market since the year 1846, and which he contended was not attributable to any legislative measure, nor such as any direct interposition of the legislature could remedy. He said :—

“There had been, in the year 1846, as in the years 1825 and 1836, a very flourishing state of things. There was such an abundance of capital, that its possessors were anxious to place it out at 2 per cent. interest, and could hardly obtain even that. Concurrently with such a rate of interest, there was a great seeking after speculations for advantageous investment, accompanied, as had always been the case, by a dangerous and wild spirit of speculation. Now, I do not mean to say that it is matter of blame, that as regards many

of these speculations, those who entered into them had not solid foundations for their calculations. I remember Mr. Tierney's saying in this House, with his natural shrewdness, that the person who, one year, is a rash speculator, may have been the year before an enterprising British merchant.

‘ Great wit to madness often is allied,  
And thin partitions do their bounds divide.’

“ One person may be most successful in rash speculations ; another, who had tolerably reasonable expectations, may be cruelly deceived by a reverse of fortune. Among other things, there occurred last year what cannot be imputed as blame either to the government or to the parties immediately concerned,—a very great failure of the potato crop. In the beginning of the year there had existed great symptoms of the recurrence of that disease ; letters came from all parts of the country stating that it was again making its ravages. I thought it necessary, and the whole House agreed as to the necessity, that the corn laws should be suspended. Many persons thinking it probable that there would be a high price of corn, entered into very large speculations in that article. It so happened, however, that by the goodness of Providence the potato disease was arrested within a fortnight after the unfavourable accounts were first received ; and, although we had a backward spring, the summer weather was so favourable, that we had not only a plentiful but an early harvest. As a natural consequence, corn, which had been bought for a very dear market, came into one in which the price was considerably depressed, and the speculator could not sell it for anything like the sum which he had given for it. That is one reason why very considerable distress fell upon the mercantile world. The combination of other causes, operating together, led to that which one alone would not have sufficed to produce. Take the case of the

railway speculations. I believe that, if this country had continued flourishing, especially if we had not had the misfortune of the failure of the potato crop of 1847, the expenditure on railways would have been kept within due bounds, and would not have been found too great for the floating capital of the country. But when, to an immense railway expenditure was added the £33,000,000 paid for corn, and when the other circumstances tending to produce distress were considered, it could no longer be matter of surprise that the whole commercial world felt the difficulty of procuring money; that capital became scarce; that that which, a few years ago, was to be had by almost any one at 1 or 2 per cent., could not be had at 5, 6, or even 7 per cent. Hence very great embarrassment in the whole of the commercial world. Now, sir, let us look at the position of the Bank. Without giving any positive or dogmatic opinion upon the subject, I may say that it has been the decision of parliament for a very long period, that we should not embark on the dangerous sea of a state currency. We place the disposition of that part of the currency which consists of paper convertible into coin, in the hands of a great Bank, which has, to a certain extent, a monopoly. The Bank directors, consisting of persons who belong to the mercantile interest, naturally enough perform all the ordinary duties which they owe to the proprietors; they endeavour to obtain discounts; they obtain the interest of the day, and few persons think of criticizing the course which they pursue with regard to commerce in general. Now, without entering into general questions, with regard to what is currency and what is not, it is evident that a great part of the transactions of the country are carried on by means of mercantile paper, that is, by means of bills of exchange, which are discounted and rediscounted, and go from merchant to merchant, and from manufacturer to manufacturer, and that a large proportion of the transactions of the country rest



upon the credit which is due to that paper, and to the facility with which it is passed from hand to hand among those who conduct great industrial occupations. But when there arise failures in the mercantile world—when, owing to the circumstance of any of the speculations, whether justly or not, being unsuccessful, one house after another fails, then begins distrust; then, the commercial world in general, not knowing exactly which house will stand and which house will fall, refer to the Bank of England as a great state machine—a machine to be put in operation for the benefit of the public, and not for the benefit of the particular proprietary to which it may belong. Now, sir, I have seen an illustration of that in the language and conduct of the directors of the Bank. On many occasions I have observed, that if they had only to consider their own interest, they would hesitate very much in giving discounts, and they would act, like prudent, private bankers and firms in general, merely for their own supposed benefit. But then they are told, ‘You must consider the interests of the public; everybody at Liverpool, Glasgow, and Manchester, is looking to you at this moment to support some great firm which is in danger of suspending payment, or some great bank which is in peril of stopping;—the industry of the whole district will be sacrificed, if you do not interfere.’ I must say, that on such occasions the position of the Bank becomes a very complicated one. If by any contrivance of legislation or of administration, we were to provide that the Bank should at all times consider the interests of the public, and not alone those of itself, or if, on the other hand, the public were generally agreed that the Bank has nothing to attend to but its own interest, and that, on occasions of distrust and discredit, no man should go to the Bank for any other accommodation than he would get as a customer in ordinary times;—in either of those cases, I say, that the duty of the Bank direc-

tors would be simple, and the problem easy of solution. But acting at one time, as it is natural for them to act, employing the balances of the exchequer to obtain a mercantile profit, and then being suddenly called upon to consider the great interests of the state, their situation is difficult and perplexing beyond measure. I say, therefore, that although it may be said that at one time they ought not to have fixed so low a rate of interest, and, at another, they ought to have lowered the rate; I think it is desirable that we should make every allowance for the double duties which they have to perform—duties which have been imposed upon them by the state, and which they could hardly perform, so as at once to satisfy the state and the proprietors. Now, sir, what was the position which the Bank held in the beginning of October? Let me say, once for all, that I do not believe that the act of 1844, or indeed any other act with regard to the currency, which the legislature might have passed, could have prevented commercial panic and difficulty. We give nearly all our measures credit for more than they can possibly perform.”

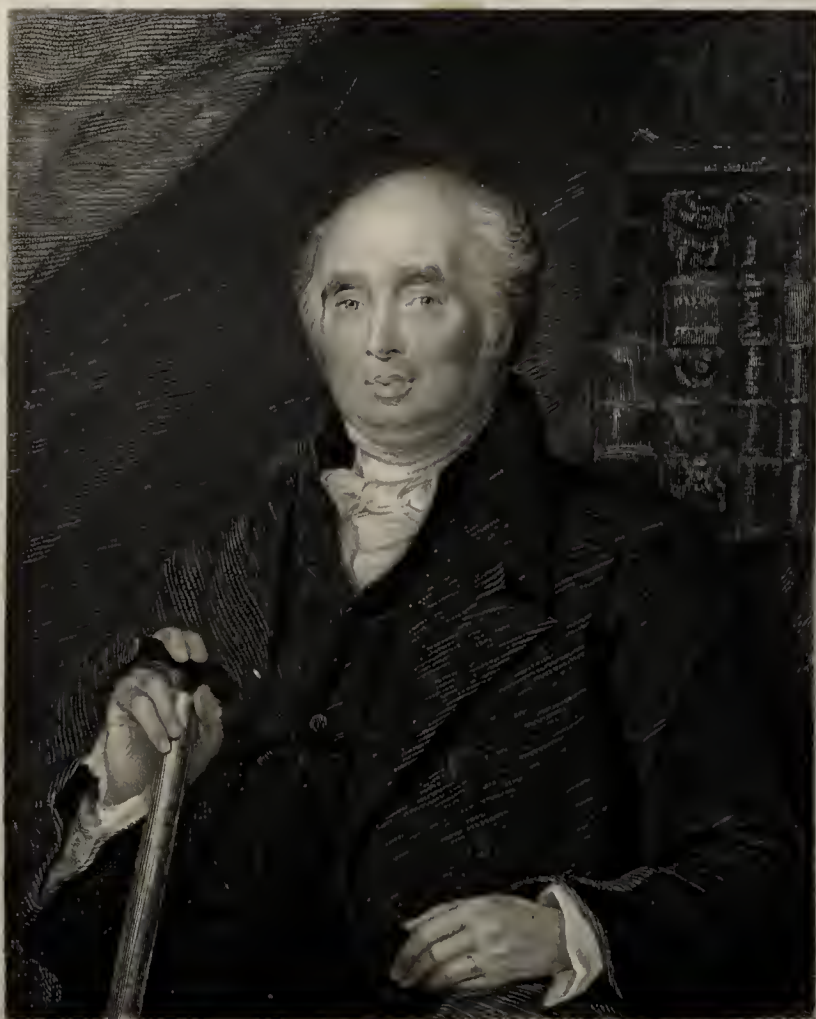
Sir Robert Peel closed the debate with the following speech in defence of his whole monetary and commercial policy:—

“ Her Majesty’s government have addressed themselves to the particular question of whether or no a committee shall be appointed to consider the causes of the recent commercial distress, including the laws which regulate banking. Sir, when a government appeals to this House for the exercise of those powers of inquiry which peculiarly belong to it, I conceive whatever opinions I, as an individual, may form as to the probable results of inquiry, that it is impossible to refuse that appeal. The functions of inquiry are our constitutional functions, and if the executive government be of opinion that there are not grounds for legislation without inquiry, then, I say, it is impossible to refuse

their appeal. An amendment has been moved on the motion of the noble lord, restricting the inquiry specifically to banking. I have experience enough to know that, even if the amendment were carried, it would be impossible to exclude other branches of inquiry. When the committee of 1836 was appointed specifically to inquire into the laws regulating banks of issue, that committee sat during the whole of 1836, was re-appointed in 1837, and did not furnish a report until August, 1838. When I state this, I think it will be admitted, that it serves no practical object to limit the subjects for inquiry. I, therefore, shall vote for the proposal of the government, because I think that if there is to be an inquiry, none of the causes of the present commercial distress ought to be excluded from it. I feel it my duty to state to the House, that I mean to devolve on no other party, on whom it does not justly fall, the responsibility which attaches to me for the part I have taken either with respect to the restoration of the standard in 1819, or the attempt to mitigate the evils which accompanied our system of banking and currency previous to 1844. I feel that I did no more than my duty in 1819 and in 1844, in calling the attention of the House to those points. Therefore, I do not wish to devolve on others my share of the responsibility, because in reverting to those measures, I do not in the slightest degree repent the course I then took. But I must submit it to this House, whether it is quite decorous, quite respectful to the character of a deliberative assembly, to attempt to make one individual member responsible for any particular course of legislation. Many members of this House are not, in their individual capacities, responsible for the bill of 1844, but in their corporate capacity they deliberate on all public questions, and nothing can tend more to depreciate the character of the Houses of Commons and Lords, than to countenance the impression







Painted by J. M. W. Turner, R.S.A.

Engraved by J. G. Heath, del.

HENRY RICHARD VASSALL, BARON HOLLAND, F.R.S., F.S.A.

*Vassall Holland*

that, in matters of this kind, involving the most important interests, being in themselves of the most complicated nature, a measure deliberately adopted by the Lords and Commons, the whole responsibility of a measure should be thrown on the individual member who happened to propose it.

“What are the facts with respect to this measure? In 1819 the measure for the restoration of the standard was proposed by me as a private member of parliament, wholly unconnected with the government. It was the result of the inquiries of two committees—Commons and Lords. The report of the committee of the House of Commons, recommending the restoration of the standard, was carried with only one dissentient voice; and that of the Lords was, I believe, unanimous. Again, when I proposed the measure of 1819 in the House of Commons, there was not one single division against the bill; and, so far as votes were concerned, the measure received unanimous concurrence. Objections were, indeed, raised by the right honourable member for Coventry; but, if I recollect rightly, on the questions that the bill be read a second and third time, there were no divisions. In the Lords there was unanimous acquiescence, excepting on the part of one member of the House of Peers, who moved an amendment, that whereas the bill proposed that cash payments should not be resumed until 1823—Lord Holland moved that 1820 should be substituted. He was not content to wait until 1823, but wished the bill to come into full operation at once. Now, as I said before, the restoration of the gold standard, in place of inconvertible paper, was a wise measure for the security of property, and for providing a just remuneration for industry; and I do not attempt to relieve myself from the responsibility which attaches to me in it; but I think I am only consulting the character of both branches of the legis-

lature when I invite them not tacitly to relieve themselves from what was the fruit of their unanimous assent.

“ Well, then, we come to the act of 1844. I was then at the head of the government; the Bank charter was about to expire, and it was necessary that some proposal should be made to the House with reference to it. It was certainly, then, competent for us to have relieved ourselves from direct and immediate responsibility, by proposing another inquiry. But I beg to remind the House, that when, in the year 1844, I proposed a particular measure for its consideration, in five preceding years there had been five different committees—in 1836, 1837, 1838, 1840, and 1841. I hear it now said, that the subject was not exhausted; that there had not been inquiry sufficient, and that further inquiry was necessary. But in 1844 I found that the subjects of currency and banks of issue had taken up 3,000 questions and 3,000 answers in 1836; that, not satisfied with that mass of information, the inquiry was resumed in 1837, and 4,570 questions and answers were added to the stock. Even that was not enough. The committee was re-appointed in 1838, when 1,700 questions were asked and answered, and even yet no practical resolution was arrived at. In 1840 the expiration of the Bank charter approached; the committee over which the right honourable the Chancellor of the Exchequer had presided with so much intelligence, was re-appointed, and to the stock of nearly 9,000 questions and answers already accumulated, 3,859 were added, each question leading to a long and elaborately reasoned answer. And in 1841, the questions and answers, then amounting to nearly 14,000, another committee was appointed, and that committee closed without any particular or specific recommendation. Mr. Tooke, Mr. Jones Loyd, Mr. Horsley Palmer, and other eminent authorities, had been examined; and it appeared to the government, that the best course would be, to submit a measure to the House of

Commons for the regulation of the currency, preparatory to the termination of the Bank charter, and to invite the House to come at last to some specific decision. The House did come to a decision. I do not believe that there ever was a question carried by much larger majorities. I think, if I recollect rightly, that not more than thirty honourable members ever voted against the proposal of 1844. In the Lords, the measure passed without opposition. I say again, therefore, that the House of Commons cannot justify itself in a matter of this kind, which ought to be kept free from all party considerations, and concerning which it had ample means of information, for having lightly, and inconsiderately, given its consent to the proposal of the government. The subject is now perfectly open to re-consideration. It would be unwise in any one irrevocably to bind himself to opinions given in 1844. Nothing could be more injurious than that any man should now refuse to come to a different conclusion from that of 1844, if, after all the experience we have acquired since on a question so complicated, he should see just cause to alter his opinion. The House of Commons would be justified in taking advantage of all this information, but it would hardly be justified in saying that on any occasion it had blindly given its assent to the proposal of any minister or ministers.

“I think that there has been some misrepresentation as to the objects of this measure. I do not deny that one of its objects was to prevent the convulsions which theretofore had occurred in consequence of the neglect of the Bank of England to take earnest precautions against undue issues of its treasure. I certainly did hope that, although no imperative obligation was imposed on the Bank for the regulation of its conduct in the banking department, yet that, after the experience of 1836 and 1839, the Bank would conform to the principles of banking which its directors had



acknowledged to be just, and from which they admitted they had departed, although they had been prescribed as rules for their regulation. From the number of mercantile houses that have failed, and from the general insolvency which has occurred, I am bound to admit that I have been disappointed in my hope with respect to the main object of the bill; but, even so, I must contend that it was in the power of the Bank to have alleviated much of the distress that was suffered. If the Bank had taken early precautions, which it was in their power to have taken—if they had had energy and resolution to meet the first difficulty by timely perseverance and determination—by raising the rate of discount—my firm persuasion is, that the necessity for that extraordinary intervention to which her Majesty's government resorted in October, would never have existed. I cannot therefore say that the state to which the country has been lately reduced was the effect of the bill of 1844 exclusively. I believe that the executive instruments, by whom that bill was to have been carried into operation, might, by persevering and energetic measures, have prevented the necessity of violating its provisions. It was said that the whole object of the bill was to control the Bank of England, and prevent the recurrence of former panics. I distinctly said, upon the second reading of the bill, that such a result would not necessarily follow. Towards the close of my speech upon the second reading, I expressed this opinion:—‘No minister could be wild enough to suppose that this measure would prevent all undue speculation in paper currency, but there was a species of speculation, independent of paper currency, which, it was hoped, the bill would be capable of checking.’ There was no attempt to cripple or control legitimate speculation. The object of the bill was a triple one. In the first, I admitted already, it had failed; but in the two others, which are of, at least, as great importance, I say it has suc-

ceeded completely ; and my firm belief is, that the difficulties which have lately beset us would have been infinitely aggravated if you had not wisely and judiciously taken the precaution of limiting your paper currency.

“ The honourable member for the city of Dublin spoke of the grievous injuries sustained by Ireland in consequence of the interference with the privileges of bankers in that part of the United Kingdom. The honourable gentleman’s authority was of course entitled to respect, but his statements were certainly somewhat new. He said that banking business in Ireland was carried on, not upon capital, but upon credit. I have great respect for the honourable gentleman’s statements—as founder of the National Bank of Ireland, they are deserving of consideration ; but I must tell that honourable gentleman, with gravity, but with suavity and courtesy, that I should much rather have his capital than his credit. If there ever was a country on the face of the earth, the poorer classes of which had suffered the utmost amount of misery and misfortune from the abuses of banking, it was that country of which the honourable gentleman had spoken. But I will give you an eminent authority on the subject of Irish banking—an Irishman too. Sir Henry Parnell, writing on that subject in 1827, said : ‘ The losses that Ireland has sustained by the failure of her banks, might be described in a very few words. There were in 1804, as appeared by the report of the committee upon Irish exchanges, 50 registered banks. Since that year, a great many more had been established—20 more, probably, making 70 in all. With the exception of a few which withdrew from business, and four in Dublin, three in Belfast, and one in Mallow, the whole had failed one after the other, involving the country in the greatest misery and distress.’ I recollect, sir, in 1820, the failures almost in one day of eleven banks, whose notes had circulation through almost the whole of Ireland, but, at all

events, through the southern and western parts. I was in the west of Ireland about ten days afterwards, and I could not possibly describe anything like the misery and destitution I witnessed. The honourable gentleman (Mr. Reynolds) said that the banks in Ireland were carried on upon the principle that they reserved gold to cover one-third of their liabilities. My recollection on that subject is entirely at variance with that of the honourable gentleman. I think if he had stated that Irish bankers held one-tenth of gold in proportion to the whole extent of their liabilities, it would have been nearer the mark. I should like to know whether the Agricultural Bank of Ireland kept one-third? But if Irish bankers wished to adopt precautions against insolvency and ruin, the bill of 1844 only aided them in doing so. The country at large was now suffering from failures, general distress, and the restriction of capital. The first impulse is to visit with blame, that very measure, but for the operation of which, I am convinced, your difficulties would have been fifty times greater. I shall now, with the permission of the House, read one or two extracts from the writings of as eminent a financier as ever lived. Adam Smith, in his well-known work, 'The Wealth of Nations,' says:—

“No complaint is more common than that of a scarcity of money. Money, like wine, must always be scarce with those who have neither wherewithal to buy it, nor credit to borrow it. Those who have either will seldom be in want, either of the money or of the wine which they have occasion for. This complaint, however, of the scarcity of money, is not always confined to improvident spendthrifts. It is sometimes general through a whole mercantile town, and the country in its neighbourhood. Over-trading is the common cause of it. Sober men whose projects have been disproportioned to their capitals, are as likely to have neither wherewithal to buy money, nor credit to borrow it, as prodi-

gals whose expense has been disproportioned to their revenue. Before their projects can be brought to bear, their stock is gone, and their credit with it. They run about everywhere to borrow money, and everybody tells them that they have none to lend.'

"Now, that is the precise condition in which we are; we run about in all directions to borrow money, and we are told by everybody he has 'none to lend.'

"I will undertake to prove beyond doubt, that at all times a low rate of interest and an apparent prosperity have led exactly to the same result. You say that it is free trade, the act of 1844, and various other causes, that have brought about the present state of things: but how do you account for this? Take the history of the last sixty years, and I will show you that at the time when protection was at the highest—in time of peace, in time of war, in times before the standard of value was established, nay, in the times of an inconvertible currency—in all these times, I will show you that apparent prosperity and a low rate of interest led to the same want of money that you are experiencing at this moment. Take, for instance, the year 1784. You had then your old standard; you had then the power of paying in silver up to the amount of £25; and yet, in 1784, in order to protect the convertibility of its notes, the Bank of England was compelled to refuse advances upon the loan, and to reduce its notes from £9,000,000 to £6,000,000. Previous to 1784 there had been years of prosperity, and there had been great speculations; but you had in consequence undue excitement, and violent action on the part of the Bank to protect its treasure from exhaustion. Then in the year 1793, when the standard remained the same, when the currency was convertible, when there had been great prosperity; yet before the war broke out, distress began. Will the House allow me to read an account of the distress which



existed in the latter part of 1792, and you will see how it corresponds with the distress in 1846? This is a quotation made use of by Mr. Tooke in his work, to which reference has already been made. He says, 'From the operation of causes which I will not pretend to explain, there were an unprecedented number of bankruptcies in 1792, prodigiously exceeding in amount those of any former period. In March there were 105 bankruptcies, there were 188 in April, 209 in May, 158 in June, and 108 in July. Many houses of established credit failed, and their fall involved vast numbers of their correspondents and connexions. Houses of undoubted solidity, and possessing ample funds, which in a little time enabled them to pay every shilling of their debts, were obliged to stop payment, and many bankers were obliged to make a pause. It was impossible to raise any money on the security of machinery, for the value of such property seemed to be annihilated; commerce and manufactures were at a stand, and those who had any money, not knowing where to place it in safety, kept it unemployed, and locked it up in their coffers.' Does not that account correspond with the state of things existing in 1846? ('No, no,' from Mr. Blewitt.) In what respect does it differ? In the year 1810 you had the command of the whole commerce of the world—you had inconvertible paper, but that did not rescue you from the same distress you suffered in 1793. In 1819 the standard was restored. If you are about to repeal the existing act, you are about to restore the unlimited and uncontrolled discretion of the Bank of England, to restore to joint-stock banks the privilege of an unrestrained issue; and I presume you would permit in that case the revival of private banks, giving to them the same right of issuing notes. Before you do that, you will do well to read the accounts of the transactions of the Northern and Central Joint-stock bank, of the Norfolk and Norwich Joint-stock bank, and of

the Manchester Joint-stock bank, and others that issued notes which professed to be convertible into gold, and you will find that the unrestricted issue of convertible paper did not prevent serious abuses, which called for the immediate interference of the government. But the simple repeal of the act of 1844 will restore to the Bank of England the exercise of full discretion without parliamentary interference. Thus, in 1826, the Bank had this unlimited discretion, and the advantage of the issue of £1 notes also.

“Now, I will give you an account of the state of affairs in 1826. I take that account from an unexceptionable authority, whose name, however we may differ from him, must command universal respect. This is the account given by Mr. Alexander Baring, the present Lord Ashburton, of the state of affairs in 1826, in consequence of undue excitement and apparent prosperity. Mr. Baring says: ‘I have no hesitation in attributing the distress of the country to the extent to which paper circulation was put eighteen months ago, and for which the country bankers and the Bank of England are answerable. The latter appeared to have a dangerous redundancy of money—that gave rise to wild speculations in every part of the country. It seemed as if Bedlam had broken loose upon the Royal Exchange—all seemed actuated by the same desire—to lay out money in whatever way they could; when all of a sudden the reverse came, and a panic seized the public. Men would not part with their money on any account. Others, of wealth and known capital, were seen walking the streets of London, not knowing whether they would be able to meet their engagements the next day. And if the crisis was allowed to pass without speaking the truth, it would only lay the foundation for future evil.’ This was in 1826. Then in 1836 the proceedings of the Bank of England almost endangered the stability of that establishment; and the president of the Chamber of Commerce

at Manchester declared, that in consequence, a loss of £40,000,000, on the great materials of cotton, wool, and silk, was to be attributed. Then in 1839 they had been obliged to apply for the intervention of the Bank of France, the gold in the Bank of England being reduced to £2,000,000; and again the evils that followed were attributed to the departure by the Bank of England from those rules which they themselves had established for their own security. Thus, then, I have shown, that in 1784, in 1793, in 1810, in 1826, in 1836, and in 1839, you would find the same causes in operation—prosperity, low rate of interest, great excitement, leading to immense engagements, which, when tried by the test of a metallic standard, you find to collapse, and stagnation and distress to follow. The same causes, in my opinion, are operating now. There has been the same prosperity, low rate of interest, undue speculation—and there has been a mode of conducting business—of issuing paper—of re-discounting bills—which I believe to be quite novel in the commercial history of this country. In this great country you chose to erect a greater superstructure of paper currency and credit on a smaller basis than any European nation. This country and the United States attempt, with a small comparative amount of the precious metals, to have an enormous structure of promissory notes and paper currency. There is no country in Europe, in proportion to the extent of its paper credit, including notes and bills of exchange, that puts itself to so small an expense by a foundation of bullion. This gives, no doubt, great facilities to enterprise; but at the same time it is accompanied by great corresponding evils. The largeness of credit, the extent of our colonial empire, is such, that when there is prosperity—when there is a low rate of interest—the temptation of both is encouraged by that great establishment, the Bank, which is the centre of credit. The

consequences which follow are inevitable. Establish what rule you please, I know that you will not go to the expense of greatly widening the basis of your currency. Why are you now calling out for relaxation, rather than for restriction? You want more paper in proportion to your gold, than you have at present; and the more paper you have, the greater will be your present ease; but if you insist upon having it, the more frequent will be the recurrence of these disasters. The United States attempts the same thing; and the United States, with its enormous advantages, its great extent of land, its growing commerce,—because it has a smaller foundation for its superstructure than even you have,—is exposed to more rapid and more disastrous vicissitudes than you are. But such is the state of your currency; and the great object is to reconcile as much of ease and of relaxation as possible, with a permanent guaranty for convertibility. And it was only after the experience of those years of distress, then patent to you, that you were led to accede to any measure having for its object the prevention of these recurrences; it was while the memory of those years was present to your mind, that you willingly acquiesced in any measure which should fetter the discretion of the Bank, and appear to give new facilities, along with a guaranty against such excesses as might endanger convertibility. It is, no doubt, painful to refer to individual houses; but I have the less reluctance in doing so, when I have seen published, on the highest authority, comparisons of their liabilities with their assets. And I hesitate not to say, that if the commerce of the country is conducted on such principles, in vain may you look to any legislative regulations, or any regulation but discretion, to prevent the evils which must flow from such a reckless course of conducting commercial affairs. Sir, when I see amongst the mass of houses, (I will not mention names, though they have been published in the



public papers,) when I see one whose liabilities are to the extent of £50,000, and its assets to the extent of £3,000, I say, if that is the practice of your commerce, don't complain of the act of 1844. Is it not monstrous that the standard of this country should be endangered, in order to cover or facilitate such transactions as these? What security can I give to a bank that has £600,000 of paid-up capital, and lends £500,000 of that capital to one house? What is it to me that the shareholders repose discretion and confidence in their directors? Why do they not take an active part in the conduct of their own affairs? They fail; and then, like this gentleman whose liabilities are to the extent of £50,000, and his assets £3,000, they exclaim—'This infernal act of 1844, this detestable restriction-act of Peel's, is the cause of all our difficulties.' We want money, and the act of 1844 prevents our getting it.' To such persons I would say—thank the act of 1844 that your difficulties are not aggravated. Just consider what would have been the state of affairs if 'Northern and Central banks,' and 'Manchester banks,' and 'Norfolk and Norwich banks,' had been entitled to foster all these speculations by an unlimited issue of paper! But you will have these excitements and these stagnations; and, depend upon it, under ordinary circumstances, the native energies of this country would enable you to overcome this. Why, you had just the same prophecies in all these years of distress. We were told, 'The sun of England is set; there is no chance of future prosperity; here are perfectly solvent persons who cannot get accommodation or money at even 10 or 15 per cent.' And some gentlemen, from whom I should have expected better things, tell us that the commerce of this country cannot be conducted if people are to pay 10 per cent for their money; and the government is blamed for causing it. Why should not the commerce of this country pay for money what that

money is worth? If it is hard that they should pay 8 or 10 per cent., pray tell me by what law you would prevent it? You would make the usury laws more stringent, you say. I think there is great reason to doubt whether the retention of a portion of the usury laws is not telling most injuriously upon those who are affected by it. We had experience of the evil effects of the usury laws in 1826. Many houses of the first respectability and solvency sank, in 1825 and 1826, because of the usury laws—because there was not a power of borrowing money, and giving for it what it was worth. What was the consequence? Those who obeyed the law could not lend their money; and those who evaded it required a still greater interest, in order to cover the risk which they incurred. Then, how can you possibly prevent this high rate of interest? But, we are told that it is restricting our export trade in cotton goods. No doubt it is; no doubt it is a novel thing that persons engaged in commercial enterprise should pay 10 per cent. for money; but no issue of bank-notes will remedy that evil. The dearth again is a dearth of capital; and while capital is scarce, pass what laws you please, you must pay for it. But, as happened in the six cases to which I have referred before, the native energies of this country would have enabled you to bear all this, without that severity of suffering which you now endure, had it not been that, in the midst of this commercial disaster, there did supervene an unforeseen cause, which but aggravated tenfold the difficulties of your position, and has augmented that depression which has been the consequence of over-excitement. Why, how is it possible to state that £33,000,000 have been spent, in the course of a few months—of little more than a year—for the purpose of providing subsistence for the people of this country, without seeing that, under any circumstances, even had it been a time of great prosperity, the evil must have been most intensely felt, the

suffering must have been most severe? And when the investment of capital, for the purpose of purchasing food, came concurrently with the exhaustion of capital, in consequence of improvident commercial engagements, it does require all the energies of this country to bear that double simultaneous burden.

“ Well, sir, but there has been a cause of still further difficulty ; concurrently with these two, there has been the adaptation of an unusual amount of capital to a new species of enterprise,—namely, the railways. I do not estimate the effect of that application of capital so highly as some gentlemen have done. I think that, under ordinary circumstances, nothing would have been more advantageous than such an application. I think that, by the extension of railways, we are laying the foundation of great future good ; and I very much doubt whether or not we ought not to deduct from any evil which the sudden application of capital to railways may have caused, all that which otherwise would have been caused by the employment of a like amount of capital in foreign railways, and in foreign securities generally. I believe that, had we not had the demand for food—had we not had the loss of capital, or, at least, the suspension of engagements in consequence of improvident commercial enterprise—we should have been able to bear the diversion of capital to railways with very little derangement of our monetary affairs. For I do not conceive that that will be a dead loss ;—the time will shortly come, those railways being completed, when they may, I hope, be productive to those engaged in them. And when I think what will be the saving to the country in the conveyance of goods, the saving of time in transport and locomotion, I cannot think that railways ultimately, though at present a means of heightening our difficulties, can fail to be a source of great improvement and gain to the country. Country banks, joint-stock banks, are nothing more than the

intervening agents between those who possess capital, and those who employ it; they receive deposits from all classes of individuals; heretofore they have been accustomed, as the media between capital and its employers, to divert almost the whole of it to commercial enterprise. Suddenly, a large portion of this capital is diverted to a new species of enterprise; and, no doubt, this must for a time add still more to the scarcity of capital, and so far increase the difficulties under which we labour. Therefore, it appears to me that the concurrence of those three causes—the last only in a minor degree, the two former more heavily—is sufficient to account for the stagnation we now feel.

“Now, sir, I must say a word with reference to the letter of the noble lord at the head of the government. I am bound to say, as not being one of the noble lord’s ordinary supporters, that I do cordially approve of the course government has taken on that matter. I think they were perfectly right in not issuing that letter sooner than they did. The true remedy for the state of things under which we are suffering, is individual exertion, the contraction of engagements, and the cessation of all demands which can create embarrassment. Had the government at an earlier period signified an intention to relax the law, they would have materially discouraged those individual exertions, which, after all, must be our main reliance. But when we were in a state of panic—a state which cannot be foreseen or provided against by law—then I think the authority of the executive government to prevent the consequences of that increasing panic, was properly exercised. I consider the issue of that letter is no necessary impeachment of the law. I entirely differ from those who say that the necessity for issuing that letter is a conclusive proof that there ought to have been a discretionary power confided in the Bank. It is one of those cases in which, as was foreseen by



Mr. Huskisson, not legislation, but the discretion of the government must apply. I think the government, therefore, was justified in issuing that letter. I think they acted with the strictest regard to all constitutional scruples in summoning parliament when they did. If there had been a violation of the law, I think the first appeal ought to have been to parliament to give them an indemnity; but as there was none, I do not know how it was possible to draw up an application for an indemnity. As far as there was any danger, it was obviated by calling parliament together, and I for one say, there is no necessity for an indemnity. I also think the government were right in not leaving a discretion to the Bank. I think it was a better course for them to take, to sanction a violation of the law, if it was necessary, but themselves to prescribe the conditions upon which the law should be violated—to sanction the violation of the law, and throw upon the Bank the responsibility of demanding a high interest.”

After referring incidentally to some suggestions which had been thrown out in the course of the debate, Sir Robert Peel concluded by again reverting to the main question at issue :—

“There was nothing in the argument, that the commercial transactions of this country had so increased, that the ancient standard was insufficient. They were in error when they talked about the price of gold; the promissory note was a promise to pay a defined weight of gold, and nothing else; and if they chose to make their £5 note promise what the £10 note did, they would not in the slightest degree alter the nature of the currency. With the standard of value, what had been the increase in the prosperity of the country? When they found, with the present standard of value, the decennial increase in the declared value of exports, which he thought from 1831 was not more than £36,000,000,

had increased in the next decennial period to £46,000,000, and within the last three years was not less than £59,000,000, they would see conclusive proof that with the ancient standard of value they could conduct the most enlarged commerce that this country was capable of. Whatever might be their minute alterations in this law of 1844, his hope was, that the House would show that they had the same regard to justice and good faith which had been shown by their predecessors ; and, remembering that whether the policy of the act of 1844 was or was not a wise policy, the transactions which had been entered into since 1822 were as 99 to 1, when compared with the transactions which took place before that period, and which still remained unliquidated, he trusted a regard to their own character—a regard for justice—for the permanent interests of the country—a regard, above all, for the condition of those who earned by their industry the wages of labour, would induce the House of Commons to uphold the standard which, after long struggling, had been established by the wisdom of parliament.”

## CHAPTER X.

## THE JEWISH DISABILITIES BILL.

THE return to parliament of Baron Rothschild, an eminent and wealthy Hebrew, as one of the four representatives of the city of London, has already been mentioned. Unable conscientiously to take the oath prescribed, Baron Rothschild had refrained from claiming his seat by presenting himself at the bar, trusting to a real or implied contract between his own supporters in London, and those of his colleague, the prime-minister, that the question would be immediately brought before parliament with a view to his relief, and that of the whole of his co-religionists, from this, the last of all the disabilities with which they were at one time degraded. Lord John Russell—who owed much of his own success in London to the supporters of Baron Rothschild—lost no time in fulfilling the pledge he had given; and on the 11th of December brought the subject formally before parliament. His lordship moved “that the House resolve itself into a committee, to consider the disabilities affecting the Jews with a view to their removal.” He contended, that the loyal and peaceable character of the Jews in Great Britain entitled them to the abrogation of the laws which deprived them of the privilege of sitting in parliament. “Of late years,” said he, “a Jew has been a magistrate; a Jew has been a sheriff. By a late law, proposed by Sir Robert Peel when he was in office, the Jews hold offices in corporations; and it was but the other day, that, by the consent of his fellow-citizens, a Jew was raised to the office of alderman in the city of London. Now I ask,” he added, “what right have we to

interpret prophecy so as to draw a line between an alderman and a member of the legislature? between the right to hold her Majesty's commission as a justice of the peace, and the right to hold a seat in parliament as a member of the legislature? Who enabled or authorized us to say that that was the line intended by prophecy; and how can we take it upon ourselves to define it, and to limit the line which the Almighty has intended to be drawn? That indeed would be to—

‘Strike from his hands the balance and the rod;  
Rejudge his justice; be the God of God.’

“I trust, sir, that no such presumption will fall to our lot; but that we shall do that which we think it our duty to our fellow-countrymen, that which we think is best for the country according to our imperfect notions, and that we shall rest in pious, humble confidence that the Almighty will accomplish his purpose by means best known to himself.”

The arguments of the prime-minister were combated by Sir Robert Inglis, Lord Ashley, and many other members; but it was difficult to show why, if a Jew could elect members to parliament, he could not himself sit in parliament; and why, if he could act as a magistrate in administering the laws, he could not give a vote towards the making of them. The opponents of the Jews had lost their vantage-ground. The existing laws, as far as they went, were all so clearly in favour of the new claim set up by the friends of civil and religious liberty in behalf of the Jews, that every argument against further concession fell powerless upon the mind of the public. The principle at issue had long ago been conceded. The House of Commons decided, by a majority of 253 votes against 186, that it would go into committee. A bill was consequently introduced, and read a first time, with the understanding that the discussion should take



place on the second reading, which was fixed for an early day after the Christmas recess. On Monday, the 7th of February, the second reading was moved by Lord John Russell, and supported by Lord Burghley, Mr. Page Wood, Mr. Milnes, and Mr. Sheil. The last-named gentleman, whose name was identified with the similar measure of relief to the Roman Catholics, made an eloquent appeal to the House and the country in favour of the Hebrews. He observed:—

“That parliament had already made Jews the depository of power. A Jew could now be high-sheriff; could empanel the jury by whom the first Christian commoner in the country might be tried. Having gone so far with the Jews, why should they not now take one step further, and displace from the statute-book the last remnant of intolerance? The Jew, who might be called upon to perform all the duties of a citizen, was fully entitled to all the privileges of one. The Jew did not derive any immunity from his religion; the religion of the Jew, therefore, should not subject him to any disqualification. It had been urged, that, between penalty and privation, there existed a difference. But all penalty resolved itself into privation. The exclusion from parliament was a great detriment, a detriment which resolved itself into a grievous wrong. What was the origin of this ‘Hebrewphobia?’ What had the church to fear from the Jews? She might have feared 6,000,000 of Catholics; she might have feared 1,000,000 of Methodists; she might well, too, fear 1,500,000 of Free Churchmen, as she might open and declared enemies without, and ‘spurious popery’ and mutiny within; but what had she to apprehend from the patient and unproselytizing Jew? When Mr. O’Connell demanded the emancipation of the Catholics, he had 6,000,000 of people at his back; but the Jew approached parliament demanding to be emanci-

pated, with nothing but reason and justice to prefer in his behalf. In such an assembly, representing as it did the high intelligence, as well as the high-mindedness, of England, reason and justice were sure to triumph, and truth ultimately to prevail. Many affected alarm lest the Christianity of the nation should, by this measure, be sapped to its foundations. But the Christianity of the two islands was as stable as the islands themselves. So long as the constitution lasted, until parliament itself should have passed away, the House of Commons would remain the mighty mirror, untarnished and unbroken, in which the religious feeling of the country would be faithfully reflected. This was the great guaranty for the security of religion. Such guaranty was not to be found in severe tests, at which honest men would pause, but which the sardonic sceptic disdained, and submitted to. If any evidence were wanting of the inefficiency of their tests, it was supplied by the case of the infidel Bolingbroke, who climbed to the pinnacle of power by means of the House of Commons, which was now called upon to shut its doors against the Jews—against the man who believed in the perpetual existence of our nobler part, in the mercy of God, and in the practices of humanity—who fulfilled the ten great injunctions in which all morality was comprised, and who professed the creed on which Christianity itself was founded. There was no authority in the Scriptures for the imposition of temporal penalties for the propagation of Heaven's truth. Not only was persecution not consonant to the spirit of Christianity, it was a practice repudiated in establishing it. Christianity was established not by, but in spite of, persecution; and was it now to be said that Christianity was to be maintained by a principle, the very reverse of that on which it was established? For centuries the history of the Jews was one of persecution and blood. Catholics and Pro-

testants had persecuted them. The Reformation did nothing for them. As a Catholic, he was proud of the expiatory steps which had recently been taken in their behalf by Catholic countries; steps which he hoped would be fully imitated here. London had, in this instance, made a noble manifestation of its will. Were they prepared to throw the Jew back upon London, that London might throw the Jew back again upon them? Such conduct would not only be inconsistent with the leading principles of their faith, but it would go far to prevent the accomplishment of their own object—the conversion of the Jews. Their policy was to identify the Jew, in all civil respects, with the Englishman, and to lead him to believe that he had a common country with those in the midst of whom he lived. The Jew was now manacled but by few fetters, but still sufficiently numerous and strong to bind him fast to his faith; sufficiently onerous, to make it apostacy to depart from the faith. Let them unfetter the Jew; and when he ceased to be persecuted for his religion, his heart would be more open to conviction, than it could be expected to be so long as he laboured under existing disabilities.”

The debate, after Mr. Sheil had spoken, was adjourned to the following Friday, when Sir Robert Peel brought it to a close by the following masterly oration. It was listened to with the utmost attention; and the House immediately afterwards proceeded to a division:—

“ It was with great reluctance that I gave a silent vote on the first occasion on which this matter was brought under our consideration; but the peculiar circumstances under which the debate closed, so immediately before the Christmas recess, and my unwillingness to incur the risk of preventing, by an adjournment, a decision on the question, induced me, on that occasion, to be silent. I now wish to state the grounds on which I have come to a conclusion

which is at variance certainly with first impressions, and which places me in painful collision with many with whom I have almost invariably acted—with some, from whom I never, to the best of my recollection, on any former subject of equal importance, have had the pain to differ.

“ I must, in the first place, disclaim altogether any concurrence in the doctrine, that to us, in our legislative capacity, religion is a matter of indifference. I am deeply impressed with the conviction, that it is our paramount duty to promote the interests of religion, and its influence on the human mind. I am impressed by a conviction, that the spirit and precepts of Christianity ought to influence our deliberations; nay, more, that if our legislation be at variance with the precepts and spirit of Christianity, we cannot expect the blessing of God upon them. I may, indeed, say with truth, that whether my decision on this question be right or wrong, it is influenced much less by considerations of political expediency, than by a deep sense of religious obligation.

“ Between the tenets of the Jew and of the Christian, there is, in my opinion, a vital difference. The religion of the Christian and the religion of the Jew are opposed in essentials. Between them there is complete antagonism. I do not consider that the concurrence of the Jew with the Christian in recognizing the historical truths and divine origin of the moral precepts of the Old Testament, can avail to reconcile their difference in respect to those doctrines which constitute the vital principle and foundation of Christianity. If, as a legislature, we had authority to determine religious error, and a commission to punish religious error, it might be our painful duty to punish the Jews. But we have no such commission. If the Jews did commit an inextinguishable crime nearly 2,000 years ago, we have had no authority given to us—even if we could determine who



were the descendants of the persons guilty of that crime—to visit the sins of the fathers upon the children, not unto the third or fourth, but unto the three-hundredth or four-hundredth generation. That awful power is not ours. ‘Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.’

“I cannot, therefore, admit the right of the legislature to inflict a penalty for mere religious error. I consider a civil disability to partake of the nature of a penalty. I speak of religious error simply and abstractedly. If you can certainly infer from that religious error, dangerous political opinions, and if you have no other mode of guarding against those political opinions except by the administration of a test for the purpose of ascertaining the religious opinions, in that case you may have a right to impose the penalty of exclusion from certain trusts. In the case of the Roman Catholic you did not exclude him because he maintained the worship of the Virgin Mary, or the doctrine of transubstantiation; but because you thought he was a dangerous subject in consequence of his acknowledging the supremacy of a foreign power, and his allegiance to another sovereign. You excluded him from political power because you believed he would abuse it. You did not inflict civil disability for mere religious error. If you can show, in this case, that the maintenance of certain religious opinions by the Jews is a decisive proof of their civil unworthiness, you may have a right to exclude them from power; but the *onus* of showing this is imposed upon you. The presumption is in their favour. The presumption is, that a Jew, as a subject of the British crown, is entitled to all the qualifications and privileges of a British subject. You may defeat that claim by proof of danger to the state, from admitting it; but the *onus* of proof lies upon you.

“The claim of the Jews, as British-born subjects, is for entire and complete qualification for office. You do not

diminish the force of that claim by their partial qualification. You allow the Jew to fill municipal offices; you concede to him the elective franchise; but the obligation to assign a reason for withholding from him what remains is precisely the same. Nay, after you admit his qualification for the privileges and franchises which you have entrusted to him, it becomes the more incumbent upon you to assign a reason for withholding complete qualification.

"A noble lord who has spoken with so much good feeling upon this question—the member for Bath—quoted an authority entitled to much weight, a distinguished man, now no more. I wish to speak of the late Dr. Arnold with the utmost respect. The noble lord read an extract from the works of Dr. Arnold, which appeared to make a considerable impression upon the House—a passage in which Dr. Arnold says, 'For the Jews, I see no plea of justice whatever; they are voluntary strangers here, and have no claim to become citizens but by conforming to our moral law, which is the Gospel.'

"We are to reject the claim of the Jews now living, born in this country, and owing entire allegiance to the British crown, to the privileges of British subjects, because their ancestors were voluntary strangers here. The descendants of an ancient Briton, of the pure blood, may be entitled to urge this objection to a Jew, but the descendant of a Norman, or a Roman, or a Saxon, or a Dane, can hardly insist upon it. His ancestors, I apprehend, were not invited here; they were 'voluntary strangers;' with this difference between them and the Jews, that the Jews were content to submit to the laws and institutions which they found established, and that the others subverted them.

"Dr. Arnold proceeds, 'I would give the Jews the honorary citizenship which was so often given by the Romans,

namely, the private rights of citizens, *jus commercii et jus connubii*, but not the public rights, *jus suffragii et jus honorum*.' I contend that the British law recognizes no such distinction; that, after conferring upon the Jew the *jus commercii*, and the *jus connubii*, the *onus* of assigning satisfactory reasons for withholding from the Jew the remaining rights of citizenship, continues undiminished. Unless you can show that there is something politically hostile in the character and conduct of the Jew in relation to the state; that in times of civil discord and discontent there is reason to apprehend his disaffection; or that, for some good cause or other, he is unworthy of confidence, you cannot defeat his equitable claim to the entire and complete rights of citizenship.

"To the opinion of Dr. Arnold I oppose the opinion of a still higher authority, that of Lord Bacon. In his argument upon the rights of the *post nati* of Scotland, Lord Bacon has the following remarkable observations:—'It seemeth admirable unto me to consider with what a measured hand and with how true proportions our law doth impart and confer the several degrees of the benefits of naturalization. The first degree is an alien enemy, the second is an alien friend, the third is a denizen. To this person the law giveth an ability and capacity, abridged not in matter, but in time. The fourth and last degree is a natural-born subject; he is complete and entire. Other laws do admit more curious distinctions of this privilege; for the Romans had, besides *jus civitatis*, which answereth to naturalization, *jus suffragii*, for, though a man were naturalized to take lands and inheritance, yet he was not enabled to have a voice in passing of laws, or at election of officers; and yet, further, they had *jus petitionis* or *jus honorum*, for though a man had voice, yet he was not capable of honour or office. But these be devices commonly of popular or free estates, which are jealous

whom they take into their number, and are unfit for monarchies ; but by the law of England, the subject that is natural-born hath a capacity or ability to all benefits whatever.' The Jew is a subject natural-born, and I contend that he has a right as such to be qualified for all civil trusts, that he has ' a capacity or ability to all benefits whatever,' unless you show a reason to the contrary,—a reason not founded upon mere religious error, but upon some good cause for political disqualification.

" In the course of this debate, the exclusion of the Jews has been justified by reference to other disqualifications to which all subjects of the Queen are liable. It is contended that it is no hardship to exclude the Jews, because copyholders are excluded from rights which freeholders possess, and minors from the exercise of powers which a man of full age enjoys. An honourable and learned gentleman, who bears a name which must be honoured in this House, the lustre of which he is, I trust, destined to renew, (Mr. Walpole,) contended that there is a distinction between the elective franchise and the functions of legislation, and cited as a proof of such distinction the case of the clergy, who are qualified to vote for members of parliament, but not to sit in parliament. Surely these are ingenious fallacies, employed for the purpose of concealing from ourselves the real character of a harsh exclusion. How does the elective franchise differ in principle from the right of legislation ? There is no such franchise given by the common law ; the elective franchise is a creature of the legislature. You withhold from the £9 householder a right which you give to the £10 householder. With respect to the exclusion of the clergy from this branch of the legislature, and with respect to exclusion of minors and those who have not sufficient property, these exclusions differ altogether in their principle from the disqualification you impose upon the Jews. In the first place, the Jew is



equally subject with those who profess Christianity to all these exclusions—of minors, of copyholders, and £9 householders. To all these disqualifications he is equally subject with ourselves ; but you superadd another disqualification, to which he is specially liable. Of the exclusions to which you refer, some are voluntary, others temporary in their duration. A clergyman, when he enters upon the sacred office, knows that he will be excluded from this House. A minor, if he live until he attains his majority, will acquire his full rights. But the disqualification of the Jew is of a different character,—it is a disqualification on account of his opinions ; it is not temporary or voluntary ; it is a superadded disqualification, and it differs in its character from the disqualifications to which other classes are subject.

“ Now, has there been assigned any valid cause for this disqualification, derived from the political conduct and character of the Jew ? On the contrary, admissions in his favour have been made, which render the hardship of excluding the Jews still more grievous. We are told by the opponents of the Jews, that in point of moral conduct, in point of active exercise of charity, in point of tried loyalty, and in point of property, the Jews are entitled to as much consideration as any other class of the Queen’s subjects. If in all these respects they are equally worthy, why subject them to exclusions which imply the want of civil worth ? If the claim of the Jew to the full privileges of a natural-born subject of the Queen can only be defeated by proof of his misconduct, or of justifiable suspicion, there is an end of the question. His claim is not even contested on that ground.

“ But there are two reasons—for I will class all the other arguments urged against the admission of the Jews under two heads, for the purpose of brevity—which have been advanced in support of their exclusion ; the force of which, if well founded in fact, I should be the last person to deny.

One of these reasons is, that you have for the last three hundred years deemed a recognition of the Christian faith a necessary qualification of a legislator; the other, that if you now abandon that qualification, and permit it to be struck out of the statute-book, where it has so long remained, this conduct on your part will imply an indifference to religion, and that such indifference is likely to relax the energies and paralyze the exertions of many devout Christians, who, in this and in other countries, are using their utmost endeavours to propagate the Christian faith. Now, I wish to weigh fairly the force of these two objections. I do not undervalue the objection that you are about to remove from the statute-book the words ‘on the true faith of a Christian.’ I fear that you will give offence to many sincere Christians by removing those words; but, on a deep consideration of this subject, I am convinced that the popular impression with respect to these words, and the circumstances under which they were inserted, is erroneous, and that it would not be just to subject the Jew to continued disqualification on account of erroneous, though most sincere and conscientious, impressions in respect to the intent and effect of the words which it is proposed to omit.

“It was said, and truly said, by the honourable and learned member for Southampton, that up to the reign of Queen Elizabeth there was no oath required from members of parliament. The principle of the British constitution before the 1st of Elizabeth, was, that the will of the electing body should determine the right to sit in parliament, and no oath was required from members of parliament before the 5th year of the reign of Elizabeth, when the oath of supremacy was administered—an oath which, if not administered on this book, [here the right honourable baronet placed his hand upon a New Testament] the Jew would have been perfectly willing to take. The oath, it is true, was administered in a

form in which it could only be taken by a sincere Christian. But in the first year of the reign of Queen Elizabeth, the law presumed every one to be not merely a Christian, but a member of the Established Church ; for it required every subject of the queen to attend divine service in the church once at least on every Sunday, on the penalty of twelve pence. The object of the oath of supremacy was to assure the Queen of the full allegiance of her subjects, and to exclude from office and from parliament all those who acknowledged the temporal or ecclesiastical authority of a foreign potentate within these realms. The substance of the oath was directed, not against Jews, but against Christians. It was the form of the oath alone which affected the Jew.

“ From the 5th of Elizabeth to the 7th of James I., no other oath than the oath of supremacy was required from members of parliament. In the 7th of James I., the year 1605, a new and additional oath was administered ; that oath which contains the words ‘ on the true faith of a Christian.’ The reason for this new oath is fully stated in the preamble to the act which imposed it. There is an express reference ‘ to the barbarous and horrible attempt to have blown up with gunpowder, the King, Queen, Prince, Lords and Commons, in this House of parliament assembled.’ This oath continued in force until the Revolution of 1688. Now, if the words ‘ on the true faith of a Christian ’ had been considered important as guarantying the Christian character of the legislature, is it not remarkable that in the first year of the reign of William and Mary they should have been altogether dispensed with ? The oath which contained them, and with the oath the words themselves, were by express enactment ‘ repealed, utterly abrogated, and made void ;’ and for that oath this simple form was substituted :—‘ I do sincerely promise and swear, that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to his majesty. So help me God.’

“From the year 1688 to the year 1701, the simple oath of allegiance was the only one required. There was no profession of the ‘true faith of a Christian’ by members of either House of parliament. In 1701, the Pretender assumed the title of James III. That title was acknowledged by Louis XIV., and it was thought necessary, for the protection of the new dynasty, to impose an oath of abjuration. The form of the oath imposed by James I., which included the words ‘on the true faith of a Christian,’ was adopted, and has since remained in force. But it was neither originally imposed, nor subsequently revived, for the purpose of assuring the Christian character of the legislature. You now plead against the admission of the Jew, the policy of maintaining that Christian character. You argue, ‘We have ceased, it is true, to be a Church of England parliament, we have ceased to be a Protestant parliament, but we have tests in force which ensure our unity as a Christian parliament.’ May not the Jew reply, that those tests were never designed for that purpose; that they were not directed against him; that they were directed, for purely political purposes, by one body of Christians against another, whose loyalty and fidelity were denied. These tests that are now to be retained as the guaranties for Christian unity, are the historical evidences of former divisions and fierce conflicts between Christians themselves.

“The member for Midhurst quotes the writ of summons for the convocation of parliament, and contends that the Jew is inadmissible to the legislature because parliament is convened to deliberate not only on matters of state, but especially ‘*de quibusdam rebus Ecclesiam Anglicanam concernentibus*.’ What is the answer of the Jew to this objection? ‘Am I less qualified than the Quaker to legislate on questions of public policy, or on matters concerning the church? I have no scruples as to the lawfulness of war.



I do not deny the right to tithes: I do not refuse their payment, except on compulsion. I have no rival religious establishment, as the Roman Catholic has. You make no objection to the Unitarian, who rejects one of the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith, and yet you plead the Christian character of the legislature as the impediment to my admission.'

"Still, it is contended that we have at least this satisfaction, that no member can be admitted to sit in the House of Commons without professing his belief in Christianity; that a declaration 'on the true faith of a Christian' is an indispensable condition of his admission. But this is not true. I hold in my hand the declaration made by a Quaker at the table of this House, and from that declaration, the words 'on the true faith of a Christian,' are omitted. You will constitute no new precedent, therefore, by omitting these words in the case of the Jew. Require from the Jew the same identical declaration which you require from the Quaker, and permit the Jew to swear in the very same form in which you permit him, nay, compel him, to swear in a court of law, and he will be perfectly satisfied. Can there be a stronger proof that you did not consider the words 'on the true faith of a Christian' an essential qualification for the legislature, than that in framing a declaration to be made by the Quaker, on his admission to this House, you deliberately omitted them. You have done the same in the case of the Moravian and the Separatist. There is, therefore, an end of the argument, that the omission of the same words in favour of the Jew would be an act without an example, derogatory to the Christian character of parliament.

"The honourable member for Dorsetshire has referred to a speech on this subject delivered by me in the year 1830, with an expression of surprise that I can now consent to the removal of Jewish disabilities. Since the year 1830, circum-

stances have occurred having an important bearing on this question, and making in the position of it a material change. You have in the interval admitted to the legislature classes of religionists, who in the year 1830 were excluded in common with the Jew; you have admitted the Quakers, the Moravians, and the Separatists. In respect to office—to civil, political, and municipal office—the present position of the Jew is entirely different from his position in 1830; and even now, and after the progress made in this debate, I doubt whether that position is clearly understood.

“It is well known that the Jews have been selected by the crown for civil distinctions; that under the late government the baronetcy was conferred by the Queen upon Sir Moses Montefiore; under the present, upon Mr. Rothschild. It is also well known that the Jews are, by a recent act of parliament, (passed in 1845,) qualified for all municipal offices. But it is not generally known that all civil and military appointments, with very few exceptions, are tenable by a Jew.

“I believe that at this moment the Jew is eligible to any executive office to which the crown may appoint him, no matter how important may be the duties attached to that office, unless in the case of offices which must be held by privy councillors, he be precluded by the oath which is administered to a privy councillor. I apprehend that there is nothing which can prevent a Jew from being secretary of state to-morrow, except through the indirect operation of the oath required of a privy councillor, and that there is nothing in the substance or terms of that oath to which a Jew would object. If you will permit the Jew to take the privy councillor's oath on the Old Testament, the oath of the privy councillor will not exclude him from the privy council. It is my conviction, therefore, that except through the indirect operation of that oath, there is not an office

within the gift of the crown from which a Jew, practically, is excluded. Let me shortly revert to the act of 1828. A certain declaration, containing the words 'on the true faith of a Christian,' was by that act substituted for the declaration against transubstantiation: and, observe, these words, 'on the true faith of a Christian,' were not inserted in the declaration required by the bill, as it was sent up to the Lords by the House of Commons. The bill, when it left the Lower House, did not contain these words; the Commons were content to admit dissenters from the church to all executive and municipal offices without requiring that declaration of Christian faith. The words were inserted in the House of Lords, and, rather than lose the bill, the amendment was acceded to by the Commons. A marked distinction was made in the act of 1828 as to the period when the declaration was required; in the case of executive office, a certain time (six months after admission to office) was given; in the case of municipal office, the declaration was required to be made previously to, or upon, admission to office. In the year 1831, a material change took place in the enactments of the Annual Indemnity act. The declaration required by the act of 1828 was then placed on the same footing as all other tests. The consequence is, that during the whole of the last two reigns,—the reign of King William and the reign of Queen Victoria,—all parties appointed to executive office have been given, under the Annual Indemnity act, the whole year to qualify. Before the year expires another Indemnity act passes; and the fact therefore is, that at this moment, except through the indirect operation of the privy councillor's oath, there is not an office under the crown which a Jew may not hold, and be protected in holding.

“ Having acceded to those important changes in the position of the Jew, and having admitted all other Dissenters to legis-

lative functions, can we permanently maintain the exclusion of the Jew from parliament? He is possessed of the elective franchise. He is eligible to, and has entered upon, municipal office. He may be Lord Mayor of London. He is shut out from no office under the crown excepting that of privy councillor. The crown has been enabled for the last seventeen years to appoint the Jew to high political office, but there is a certain trust which can only be exercised through the good will of electors, the great majority of whom must probably be professing Christians; and yet from that trust the Jew is to remain excluded. There is no jealousy of the crown in respect to the appointment of Jews to the most important civil offices, but such jealousy of the Christian electors of this country, that you will not permit them to send the man of their choice to this House, if he happen to be a Jew.

“Sir, my opinion is, that you cannot permanently maintain that exclusion; and if you cannot, why not remove it now? You have removed other disabilities with little danger to the interests of the Church, or to the interests of the Christian religion. My firm belief is—and I rejoice in the conviction—that the Church of England is stronger at this moment than at any period of her history. The disposition of the Church to admit timely and salutary reforms has been one great cause of that strength. A still more efficient cause is the deep religious feeling which has been awakened through the country. The strength of the Church and of religion is not now dependent on the question of two or three votes, more or less, in this House. The Church is strong enough to be independent, on all essential points, of the decisions of this House. It is rooted in the affections of the people, and it is a disparagement to religion and to the Church, to contend that the safety of either depends upon the continued exclusion from this assembly of the Baron de Rothschild, or three or four gentlemen of the Jewish faith. Were it not for



internal dissensions within the Church itself, the Church would be stronger at this moment, after the successive relaxation of disabling laws, than it was, even at the period when you required conformity to the faith of the Church as an essential qualification for parliament.

“I cannot, then, assign danger to the Church as a reason for excluding the Jew. At the same time, I deeply regret that the feelings of zealous and pious Christians should be wounded by the omission from an oath, of the words ‘on the true faith of a Christian.’ Believing, however, the impression, with regard both to the original intent and the effect of those words, to be erroneous; seeing that it is an error to suppose they have formed a part of the qualification for parliament for an uninterrupted period since their first introduction in the reign of James I., inasmuch as they were ‘utterly abrogated, repealed, and done away’ at the time of the Revolution, and were only revived thirteen years afterwards for a purely political purpose; seeing that it is an error to suppose that they are now required for every member of the legislature, inasmuch as they were waived in the case of the Quaker, the Moravian, and the Separatist,—I cannot think it just to continue the exclusion of the Jew from deference to conscientious, but erroneous, impressions.

“I own, sir, that I do cordially rejoice that I can find no constitutional impediment to the complete admission of the Jew to the right of a British subject. If there be a class of our fellow-beings to whom reparation is due from every Christian state in Europe—reparation for centuries of calumny, persecution, and wrong—the Jews are that class. I defy you to read the early history of this country, narrated, not by indignant Jews, but by the popular historians of your own faith, without shuddering at the atrocities committed by Christian sovereigns and a Christian people. Hume says, ‘Our ideas scarcely come up to the extortions which we find

to have been practised upon the Jews.' Speaking of king Henry III., and detailing his unjust demands for money, and his threats to hang the Jews if they refused compliance, he says, 'The king then delivered over the Jews to the Earl of Cornwall, that those whom one brother had flayed, the other might embowel.' He remarks, that 'the acts of violence against the Jews proceeded much from bigotry, but more from avarice and rapine.'

"Even in that age, these things would not have been done or tolerated, but for deep-rooted prejudices and wide-spread antipathy to the Jews on account of their religious faith. Are we quite sure that the same prejudices, the same antipathy, do not still exist? We disclaim them within these walls; but are they not the real cause of much of the opposition to the relief of the Jew from civil disabilities? Of this I am confident, that within the present century both the people and the government of this country have been influenced by such unworthy feelings. It was the deference to irrational prejudice that induced the ministry, in 1753, to propose the repeal of the act for the naturalization of foreign Jews passed in the preceding year. The most disgraceful day in the annals of the British parliament was that on which the Duke of Newcastle, the first minister of the crown, proposed the repeal of that act. A general election was impending—great excitement prevailed—excitement of such a nature, that the member for Exeter, who had voted in favour of the Jews, was denounced as a Jew, and was compelled to appease his constituents by citing, in proof of his Christianity, the fact that he had repeatedly travelled on a Saturday, the Jewish sabbath.

"The Lord Chancellor, (Lord Hardwicke,) in his place in the House of Lords, condescended to vindicate the government for proposing the repeal of the Naturalization act, by such arguments as these. Speaking of the Jews, and the popular

feelings towards them, Lord Hardwicke observed: 'By our laws they may be protected from any open violence or direct assault; but whilst the people are so highly and so generally exasperated against them, as they everywhere appear to be at present, they will be exposed to daily insults and vexations which no law can provide against or punish; especially in this country, where no man, not even the king himself, is vested with absolute power, and where every magistrate is obliged to confine himself within the letter of the law. Therefore, whilst the people continue in their present humour, it will be impossible for any Jew, rich or poor, to live here with the same ease and security which he did before that law was passed.'

"Again: 'I am convinced that the ill-humour of the people would before now have broken out, if it had not been for the hope, that as soon as parliament met, the law would be repealed; and if they were to see two or three dozens of their countrymen hanged every session for mobbing or murdering the Jews, I believe it would not contribute towards restoring them to good humour, especially as many of them would find, at least imagine, that the Jews interfered with them in their trade or business.'

"For such reasons as these, in avowed obedience to the most irrational and vulgar prejudices, a slight privilege conceded to the Jews in 1752 was suddenly withdrawn in 1753, by the same ministers and the same parliament by which it had been granted.

"I have cited the authority of Hume for the cruelties practised in England upon the Jews, during the reigns of king John and his successor. Let me read an extract from another historian, Sharon Turner, containing a brief summary of the persecutions to which this unhappy people were subject in this country and other parts of Europe:—'When we recollect their massacre along the Rhine, in 1096, and in

England in the time of Richard I., and read of their repeated destructions in Germany—in 1220 at Erfurt; in 1263 at Fulda; when, on an accusation of their killing Christian boys for their blood, the emperor ordered an inquiry whether Christian blood was a necessary part of their Passover; to which the official answer was, that nothing certain was known on the subject. In 1240, at Frankfort, ‘with fire and sword;’ in 1282, at Mentz and other places; in 1298, at Nuremberg, and through all Franconia: that they were also exterminated from Bavaria; that in 1348, 1349, and 1350, they were killed ‘like cattle,’ and mercilessly burnt in great numbers at Basle, Friburg, Spire, Wurms, Frankfort, Mentz, Alsace, Cologne, and in every part of Germany;—when we recall to mind that these are only specimens of what they endured in other places, and were for several centuries in perpetual danger of everywhere suffering, we can hardly persuade ourselves that any remnant of the nation so bitterly persecuted can now be surviving.’

“They have survived, having borne their wrongs with exemplary patience and resignation. Suppose the result of these bitter persecutions had been to make the Jews a degraded race;—suppose ‘the iron had entered into their souls;’—suppose they had been so bowed down as to have become ‘*curvæ in terris animæ, ac cœlestium inanes,*’ who would be responsible for their degradation?

“If the Jews were debased, or inferior in moral worth to Christians, could that debasement and inferiority—the natural result of oppression—be now assigned with any semblance of justice, as an impediment to the grant of equal rights to the Jews? Could the Christian rulers of Europe justly reproach the Jews for continuing a separate people, and for being deficient in ardent patriotism and devoted attachment to the institutions under which such wrongs had been inflicted? Could they be astonished, if, vexed by



repeated persecutions, the Jews permitted the past, the distant, and the future, to predominate over the present?—if, sitting down by the waters of strange lands, they wept when they remembered Sion?

“But, according to your own acknowledgment, the Jews have not been debased. In point of courage, of moral worth, of intellectual power, of mental acquirements, they yield precedence to none. They have been faithful subjects of the crown: in the times of severe trial, at home or abroad, their loyalty has never wavered. On what ground, then, do you justify their exclusion from any privilege of a Protestant subject? Are they not so far entitled to our confidence, that they may be qualified for a trust, which they cannot exercise, except through the good will of Christian constituencies.

“It may be, that considerations of the past—that the desire to make reparation for former wrongs—ought not to control or influence our judgment; but they may so far operate as to inculcate the duty of mature reflection, whether we cannot reconcile our feelings with our duty, and to increase our satisfaction, if we find that they are not incompatible.

“I have other motives that weigh with me. There are countries in which the Jews are still subject to persecution and cruel oppression. Twice within the last three or four years has a British subject, distinguished for his benevolence and philanthropy, Sir Moses Montefiore, repaired to distant lands, in the hope of mitigating the hard lot of the suffering Jews. He repaired to St. Petersburg, for the purpose of imploring mercy towards the Jews in Poland. He repaired to the East, for the purpose of relieving, if possible, the Jews in Palestine from shameful wrongs, perpetrated on the pretext that they murdered Christian children in order that their blood might be available for the Passover.

“He carried with him letters of recommendation from

British ministers, certifying his high character for integrity and honour, and the purity of the motives by which he was actuated. How much more persuasive would those letters have been, if they could have announced the fact, that every ancient prejudice against the Jews had been extinguished here, and that the Jew was on a perfect equality, as to civil rights, with his Christian fellow-citizen. Place him on that footing of perfect equality, and the influence of your benevolent legislation will extend far beyond the narrow limits of your own country. You will exercise an authority and jurisdiction, even in foreign countries, which laws, however jealous of external interference, cannot exclude—the moral authority of a just and benevolent example. You will offer consolation to many a wounded spirit, and weaken the force of the prejudices and antipathies which harden the heart against the impulses of humanity ; at any rate, you will make it impossible to justify those prejudices by the example of England.

“It remains for me only to refer to the argument against the removal of Jewish disabilities which was chiefly relied on by my right honourable friend, (Mr. Goulburn,) and urged by him with great force and effect.

“My right honourable friend says, that there are many zealous Christians, who, from the deepest conviction and the purest motives, devote their lives to the propagation of divine truth, and the reclamation of the ignorant and the guilty from sin and error. He says justly, that we possess an extended empire, bringing us into contact with gross ignorance and superstition—which pious missionaries are labouring to extirpate. He fears that their zeal will be relaxed, and their exertions paralyzed, if the legislature should manifest that indifference towards divine truth which might be implied by the admission of the Jew to the legislature, and by thus relinquishing the distinguishing character of a Christian parliament.

“I concur with my right honourable friend, that vast dominion imposes upon us the gravest responsibility. That dominion may be destined by Providence to advance much higher purposes than the aggrandisement of empire, or the extension of commerce. Empire and commerce may be the means towards a great end; they may be the avenues through which the light of knowledge is to penetrate the cloud of error, through which the Day-spring from on high is to visit those that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death. I agree with him, that if by assenting to this measure, indifference towards divine truth could be justly imputed to us—if the suspicion of it should relax the zeal or defeat the exertions of devout and pious men labouring in the cause of true religion, such a result would be a lamentable one, with evil consequences far outweighing any which could arise from the continued disabilities of the Jews.

“My right honourable friend contends, that even if the zeal of the pious missionary should not be damped by our misconduct—if he should still continue to enforce the truths of Christianity—yet if it came to the knowledge of those to whom these truths were addressed, that at home the distinctions between Christians and Jews had been abolished, by admitting the Jews to legislative functions, the millions of heathens whom Providence has placed under our rule would be shocked by our inconsistency, and would be unwilling to assent to doctrines which we ourselves appeared to repudiate.

“I cannot concur in the apprehensions of my right honourable friend. Let me take the natives of some distant country, utterly ignorant of the truths of the Gospel, but not insensible to the force of reason. If you could tell them that your policy towards the Jew was that of the reign of Richard I., or of the Spanish Inquisition;—that you so abominated the crime which his ancestors had committed,

and so detested his unbelief, that you would hold no communion with him;—that by your laws he was subject to banishment and torture; the heathen might think you deficient in charity, but give you credit for your devotion to the true faith. But if you told the heathen, as you must tell him, that your relation to the Jew was not very well defined,—that you lived on friendly terms with the Jew,—that you imposed on him all the burdens to which a British subject was liable,—that you freely borrowed his money,—that the Jew might dispense justice as a magistrate, that he might be Lord Mayor of the City of London,—that he was qualified for almost all civil offices,—that he might elect members of parliament; but that, from zeal for the Christian faith, you could not allow the Jew to be a member himself: surely this appeal, however consistent with the truth, would not make a powerful impression on his mind.

“Try the force of another appeal. Tell the heathen of the wrongs which Christian states have inflicted on the Jews: tell him that we live under a constitution which knows no distinctions among British subjects as to civil rights;—that we profess a religion which commands us to be forbearing and forgiving towards one another;—that we serve a God whose Almighty power is most chiefly declared by showing mercy and pity;—that we worship a Redeemer who incalculated by his life, and sanctified by his death, the precepts of Christian charity;—tell him, that in humble obedience to these precepts, we have given to the Jews the same benefits and privileges we possess ourselves.—Try the force of that appeal, and it will not be made in vain.

“It is for these reasons—because I believe it to be in conformity with the enlarged and comprehensive spirit of the British constitution, that these disqualifications should no longer exist—because I rejoice in the opportunity of making reparation for the injuries and persecutions of former times—



because I think the Jew has fairly earned the privileges which it is proposed to extend to him, by patience and forbearance—by tried fidelity and loyalty—but, above all, *because* I am one of a Christian people, *because* I am a member of a Christian legislature, I will perform an act, which I believe to be in strict conformity with the spirit and precepts of the Christian religion. We are commanded by that religion, as the condition of our own forgiveness, to forgive those who have trespassed against us. That duty is not in this case imposed upon us; but there is another duty, as sacred in point of moral obligation, and more trying to human pride, namely, that we should forgive those against whom we have trespassed. Sir, I shall give my cordial support to the bill before the House.”

The applause of the House constantly interrupted the orator in this clear enunciation and forcible expression of those great principles of civil and religious freedom with which his name, since the repeal of the law affecting the civil rights of the Roman Catholics, had become so eminently associated:—and the second reading was carried by a majority of 277 against 204. It passed rapidly through committee and the final ordeal of the third reading, but was ultimately thrown out by the House of Lords. The question, however, was not decided by its rejection, but was brought forward on a future occasion in a still more striking and peremptory manner.

## CHAPTER XI.

## FINANCIAL STATE OF THE COUNTRY—THE FRENCH REVOLUTION—THE INCOME TAX.

THE state of the national finances was a subject which now began to occupy a very large share of the attention of public men of all parties. The expenditure of various public departments, more particularly those of the army, navy, and ordnance, had been on the increase during a long series of years, which the revenue, with the aid of the newly devised income tax, was inadequate to meet. The consequence was a deficiency, which for the current year, according to the first financial statement of Lord John Russell, was estimated at nearly £2,500,000. In this position of affairs, the prime minister not only proposed to renew for five years the income tax, of which term three years was about to expire, but also to increase it from seven pence to one shilling in the pound for two years. Of course this statement, and the contemplated aggravation of a most unpopular impost, led to much angry discussion; and Mr. Hume threatened to bring forward a motion for suspending all supplies till the House had decided upon the statement of the premier.

The government endeavoured to parry the difficulty by moving the appointment of a secret committee to inquire into the finances of the country, but the House was not to be satisfied by this expedient:—and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, finding it impossible (February 21) to obtain even a vote of credit on account, was fain the next day to come before them with a proposition for an investigation upon a more comprehensive scale, and before public committees. He moved that two committees be appointed.

the one "to inquire into the expenditure for miscellaneous services, and to report to the House whether any reductions could be effected, or any improvement made in the mode of submitting this branch of the public expenditure to the consideration of parliament;"—the other "to inquire into the expenditure on account of the navy, army, and ordnance, and to report their observations thereupon to the House." This motion in some measure allayed the feeling of opposition, although the repugnance to the proposed increase of the income tax continued unabated.

About this time, and for months previously, some alarm, and very considerable discussion, had been excited, by the alleged insufficiency of the national defences to repel invasion, in case war had suddenly broken out between Great Britain and France. It was not believed that such a war was probable, but it was insisted that it was bad policy to be utterly unprepared for war, and to be over-confident in the maintenance of peace. A letter from the Duke of Wellington to Sir John Burgoyne, which had been made public, although not originally intended by the illustrious writer for appearance in the newspapers, had attracted unusual attention. The high authority of the victor of Waterloo naturally commanded respect, and the journals for a time teemed with letters upon the defenceless state of our coasts; and the necessity for an increased naval as well as military force. Among these letters, one from the Earl of Ellesmere excited the greatest amount of criticism. The parties that most urgently clamoured for a reduction of the national expenditure, were those who most lustily endeavoured to show that the alarms of his lordship were groundless. On the motion for a secret inquiry into the whole state of the national finances, which would have, of necessity, included the question of the national defences, Sir Robert Peel expressed his views upon both subjects with his usual clearness. He objected to the proposal

for a secret inquiry, if only upon the ground of precedent, and supported the motion for a public investigation. "He trusted that the committee was not to be looked upon as relieving the executive from any portion of its responsibility. He was willing to consider the estimates, as prepared on the responsibility of government. He knew, from recent experience, that the imputations thrown upon the executive, of a desire to increase the estimates, was one entirely unfounded. He believed it was the interest and desire of governments generally, to bring down the estimates as low as possible." The impression that they were kept up for the purposes of patronage, of extended military appointments, of gratifying supporters by having commissions to give away, he asserted to be utterly erroneous, and declared that it was for the interest of an administration, looking at its stability, that the estimates should be as low as they could be made. He went on to say, that, after the panic which had prevailed in the country, after the alarm which had pervaded large classes of the community, "he was glad to see that both had visibly abated. He confessed, that he had been under some apprehension that government would be unduly influenced by that alarm, and was rather relieved to find that no increase was proposed in the estimates. He had read the letter of a noble friend of his, (the Earl of Ellesmere,) for whom he entertained a high respect, indicating the course which should be taken in case of invasion. That letter stated that, in such an emergency, the duty of the Lord Mayor of London would be—not to summon the citizens to its defence—but to make the Mansion House the head-quarters for making out billets for the French army. He must say, that, when he read that letter, he thought it gave a most imperfect and unjust account of the spirit of Englishmen. He did not mean of the military—even that splendid corps, the guards, which his noble friend had since relieved from all imputation—but of the strength of the country, of the spirit of the men of



mature age, ay, and even of the old men and old women. He verily believed, that, if the Lord Mayor, instead of occupying himself in the defence of the metropolis, were to abandon that duty for the purpose of billeting the French army, he would perform that duty in secret, and would not dare to show himself in Cheapside. He was perfectly convinced that, if an attempt should be made to subject this country either to insult or invasion, it would be difficult to estimate the spirit with which such an attempt would be met. He said nothing against the propriety of taking proper precautions, because although everybody knew what would be the ultimate result of any attempt, yet even the most partial success must be accompanied with much ruin to private fortune, and great desolation. But he confessed that, on seeing the estimates, and after reading all the recent publications, so far from being astounded by the proposition of the government, he was greatly relieved by the proposition of the noble lord. He thought that a wise discretion had been exercised in not increasing the naval or military forces. None but a government could know the amount of force necessary; and when a proposition was made on the responsibility of government, the circumstances must be very clear which could induce him, as a private individual, to offer any opposition to their proposal. He would only say, that, looking at the present state of the world, and the disposition which we ourselves had shown to increase our colonial empire—looking at Labuan, Hong Kong, and other recent acquisitions, which were much approved of, especially by the mercantile community—he was not surprised that large increases in our naval and military establishments should be necessary. He could not look at what had occurred in China so very recently, without seeing that a necessity might spring up at any moment for protecting the lives and properties of British subjects in distant parts of the world. If government, therefore, recommended a small

addition to the marines and scientific corps, he did not feel justified in offering any opposition. They should look also to Italy, Spain, and, in the New World, to Mexico, particularly with reference to the spirit which seemed to animate the American public—a spirit which he thought would act to their own detriment—he did say, looking at all these things, that it was not unreasonable in the present year to ask that our military and naval establishments might not be reduced. That was the conclusion to which he had come, founded upon those means of observation which were open to every member of the House. He was prepared, therefore, to discuss these estimates, and to give his assent to them generally, without the intervention of any committee. At the same time, as government invited the co-operation of the House in considering all the details of the estimates, and in inquiring into the amount of the force, as well as into the reasons why government considered that amount necessary, together with the mode of conducting the military establishments of the country, [it being understood that such inquiry was not to interfere with the discretion of the government and their responsibility as to the amount of the force,] he thought it possible that some public advantage might result. He thought public advantage had resulted from similar inquiries in former years. He must, however, agree with the honourable member for Montrose, that much would depend on the constitution of the committee. It would not be satisfactory if wholly composed of persons ‘hardened to high estimates’—or of men influenced by official habits. But if the inquiry were conducted by men who would exercise a full and free judgment upon all points of public expenditure brought within their notice—(of course, he meant that the inquiry should be conducted by a select and not a secret committee)—it was possible that some reduction in the public expenditure might be

effected without prejudice to the public service. It would, however, be a most objectionable precedent if they attempted to interfere with the functions of the government in respect to the estimates which they had on their own responsibility brought forward ; and it was because such was his opinion that he stated, that he was prepared to assent generally to the estimates as they had been laid before the House."

The motion was agreed to, and the committees appointed.

But about this time the current of English politics was disturbed by the storm of the French revolution : and the financial measures of the government were the first to feel the effect. For years prior to the eventful month of February, 1848, the politicians of eastern and western Europe looked with apprehension to the time, which in the course of nature could not be far distant, when the sagacious but unscrupulous man that ruled over the French nation, should be removed from this mortal scene. He was supposed to hold in his hand the peace or the embroilment of Europe, and, by the force of his character and position, to keep within safe bounds the dangerous effervescence of a too active-minded and mischief-loving people ; to hold the "yelping curs" of ultra-democracy in subjection ; and to be a guarantee to all the friends of order and material prosperity, that as long as he lived, the one should not be troubled, or the other impeded. The speculators of the stock-exchange of London, and of the *bourse* of Paris, in their respective spheres of operation, added strength to this conviction, by their sensitiveness to the reports of the health of the monarch ; and throughout society nothing was heard but woeful vaticinations as to the fate of Europe, when Louis Philippe should be gathered to his fathers, and his perilous sceptre should pass into the feeble grasp of his grandson.

There were others, however, who thought that these apprehensions were not founded on a calm consideration of the







Louis Philippe

facts. So far from the decease of the king being likely to augment the chances of war, or to add fuel to the smouldering fires of Gallic discontent and ambition, these politicians believed that his life was more dangerous to Europe than his death ; and that the system which he had pursued for the previous seven years, under the ready instrumentality of his minister, M. Guizot, had done more to impair French social and national morality, to convulse French society, and to imperil the peace of Europe, than anything that could be done by his successors, however weak or however wicked they might be. It was true that Louis Philippe had lately shown himself the friend of peace. During the first few years that followed the revolution of 1830, it required no small tact to preserve his throne, and secure his dynasty. Louis Philippe managed to establish his throne. As war might have endangered it, he tried peace. It was a sure game, and it succeeded. But it was not for the sake of the material advancement of Europe, nor for that of French liberty, as subsequent events but too palpably showed ; but for the sake of his dynasty, that he temporized, and made friends for himself beyond the pale of his own country. Having succeeded to some extent in this object, and all danger of war for a second Bourbon restoration having blown over, the "Man of Peace," showed himself in his true colours. If he formerly avoided war for the sake of his throne, he afterwards risked it for the sake of his dynasty. In the year 1848, there was not a living man whose conduct had done more than that of Louis Philippe, during the previous three years, to convulse Europe. Not only had he deprived his own nation, sensitive, irascible, and high-spirited, as he knew it to be, of every rational object for which the revolution of 1830 was achieved, and thus provoked a reaction of the most dangerous kind ; but he had rendered a civil war imminent in Spain, by the selfishness and cruelty of his policy. He

had, in cold blood, and by the foulest means, sought to revive the ambitious designs of Louis XIV., and to establish an Orleans' dynasty in that country—an object which he knew that Europe could not permit; and which the Spanish people were determined to resist.

There was, it is true, another danger, which many anticipated on the death of the king. It was feared that his disappointed, cajoled, and oppressed people, would take that opportunity to re-enact revolution. The revolution of 1830 had been a signal failure. The French people knew it, but they also knew the reason why. They sought a reform of the system established by the events of 1830. They sought it by peaceable and constitutional means. The king sought to prevent it by unconstitutional means. They knew the difference between rational and equable liberty on the one side, and wild and convulsive license on the other; and they formed a firm determination to achieve for themselves, by peaceable and unremitting efforts, that high and assured position among free nations to which their unparalleled sacrifices in the cause, and their advanced stage of civilization, entitled them. They felt that the monarch who was the creature of the revolution, had become its destroyer; and that a selfish tyranny, ruling by means of systematic and wide-spread corruption, was scarcely to be preferred to the more open tyranny of the elder Bourbons. There were at this time about 240,000 electors in France, while there were upwards of 280,000 places in the gift of the king and his ministers, of which nearly 50,000 had been created by the Guizot ministry, for the purposes of corruption. There was thus a bribe for every elector, and 40,000 bribes to spare. The leaders of the French opposition, supported by the intelligent of the lower classes, all the middle classes not in the actual receipt of the king's bribes, and many of the upper classes, demanded a reform of this scandalous system. They insisted upon

an extension of the suffrage, in order that such demoralization should be stopped. Had the king been likely to live long, they would have tried the question with him. As he was not likely to live long, they were content to take their chance with the regency. They knew that his successors would fear to hazard the existence of the dynasty upon the issue of the game; and that they would, on the due compulsion of popular opinion, grant the demand, without violence and bloodshed, by the free vote of a deliberative assembly.

The danger, therefore, was not in the death of Louis Philippe, but that he should live to disturb the peace of Europe by his foreign intrigues, or by such ill-devised denunciations as that contained in his last speech from the throne, or by such acts of tyranny as that committed, when the reform banquet of one of the arrondissements of Paris was prohibited by the police. It was clear that Louis Philippe's successors could not play a more hazardous game than he was at that time playing. The state of Europe might be full of peril, but it was peril which his death would rather have diminished than increased. Whether he lived or died, it was clear that the battle between despotism and constitutional liberty would have to be fought out. He might be cunning, experienced, and far-seeing, but he was not virtuous; and it was seen that that great struggle, come when it might, could not but be precipitated by the selfish conduct of a man who had proved that there was no object so exalted, no cause so holy, that he would not have sacrificed to the lust of money, and the supposed interests of his family.

It was felt in Paris for months before the revolution actually broke out, that unless a change of system were adopted, a convulsion would ensue. It took place sooner than was expected, and verified the predictions of all those who had had sagacity enough to understand the real state of French opinion. The shock was felt throughout Europe:



and created scarcely less excitement in this country, than in others less fortunate, which had long trembled on the brink of similar disasters. The first mention made of the circumstances in the House of Commons was on the 28th of February, when the fate of Louis Philippe was yet unknown.

Mr. Hume asked her Majesty's government whether it was their intention to abstain from interference with the people of France, and to leave them at liberty to choose and settle what form of government they pleased?—Lord John Russell observed, that the government had received intelligence of the change which had taken place in France, and he could assure the House that they had no intention whatever to interfere with the form of government which the French nation might choose to select for themselves, or in any way to meddle with the internal affairs of France.

This announcement was received with vehement cheering from all sides of the House, and appeared to give general satisfaction. In the course of the same evening, however, incidentally to the presentation of a large number of petitions against any increase of the income tax, the subject was again referred to by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who recalled some observations which had fallen from Mr. Cobden on a previous occasion, in regard to the condition of the French nation. In reply to a demand which had been made, that the government should pledge themselves to the abandonment of a proposed increase of 2 per cent., in the income tax in two years; the Chancellor of the Exchequer said: "What might be the necessities of this country before two years were expired? what might be its condition and policy in the course of a few months? How long was it since an honourable gentleman recently returned from France (Mr. Cobden) had assured them that the French had no object to serve by revolution?" This taunt was received with loud

cheering from the opposition, and was answered by counter-cheers from the ministerial benches.

When the cheering had subsided, the Chancellor of the Exchequer concluded by candidly admitting that the proposed increase of the income tax had been "received from all quarters of the House and of the country by the most unequivocal demonstrations of disapproval. He laid it down as a maxim, that the representatives of the people had a peculiar right to dictate to the government with respect to taxation. The proposals that he was prepared to make, were, to abandon the proposed increase, and that the expenses of the Kaffir war, and for the naval excess, should be defrayed out of the balances in the Exchequer, which were remarkably high—but which course of proceeding would leave a deficiency of between £1,500,000 and £2,000,000, at the end of the next financial year. He also proposed to continue the existing income tax for three years only—but in making these concessions, he said it was to be understood that government might propose at some future period during the session, whatever taxation they might find necessary to restore the balances of the Exchequer." This announcement was received as a victory over the Income-tax, both in and out of the House.

Mr. Hume contended that we should at once reduce our military force, and show France that she had nothing to fear from us.

Mr. Cobden, referring to the Chancellor of the Exchequer's allusion to his opinions on the affairs of France, confessed candidly that he had not been prepared for the political revolution which had taken place, because he could not foresee the madness of a minister, and the insanity of a monarch, to both of whom he had given credit for sagacity. "If it were the policy of the dominant class in England to avoid collision with France, it was in their power to do so. But he warned the country, that unless

the people took the matter into their own hands, there was danger that such collision would ensue. They were not going to war with France, to maintain despotism in other parts of Europe."

Lord John Russell replied, that Mr. Cobden had unfairly attempted to excite suspicion out of doors, that he had not been sincere in what he had said in answer to Mr. Hume. "He would now reiterate what he had then said—that it was not the intention of the government to interfere in any way with the arrangements which France might make with regard to her own government. The only interest which they had in France was that of neighbours and friends; and he hoped that the institutions which France might adopt would tend to her prosperity and happiness. He did not mean, in anything that he had said, that England should refuse to perform any of those sacred duties of hospitality which she had shown at all times to distinguished refugees of every shade of opinion."

To this Mr. Disraeli observed that if M. Odillon Barrot had in one day given in his adhesion to three governments, the ministry of this country had, in the course of ten days, proposed one budget and suspended it by a second, and would in all probability in a few days propose a third. What was a miserable deficit of £2,500,000, as compared to the gain of £100,000,000 annually, which, according to Mr. M'Gregor's evidence before the import-duties committee, the working classes were to gain by the repeal of the corn and provision laws? He added, that if Mr. Cobden was again prepared to raise the standard of agitation, he would not find him and his friends fall without a struggle, unless they were again betrayed. He then took a lengthened survey of the operations of the principles of free trade, which he blamed for most of the difficulties of the country. He deeply deplored all that had taken place in France, by which the cause of peace and progress had been re-



*Louis Napoléon Bonaparte*

*Emperor of the French Republic*





tarded. He lamented that her late ruler had fallen. He was, in his opinion, a great prince, who for eighteen years had secured to Europe the blessings of peace. "He hoped there would be no mistake as to the firm resolve of the people of England not to interfere in any way with the domestic and municipal affairs of France. If the people of France maintained the faith of treaties, the nations of Europe would preserve their independence. He was sorry that any minister of the Crown should have alluded even to the contingency of war. They had no right to suppose that war would occur. The income tax was a war tax, and that was a reason why it should be delicately dealt with."

The preceding conversation, as already stated, took place incidentally upon the discussion of the financial propositions of our government, the acceptance of which, it will be seen, was not a little endangered by what had recently taken place upon the continent.

On Monday the 6th of March, on the House going into committee of ways and means, Mr. Hume moved an amendment, that the income tax should only be continued for one year instead of three. This led to some important discussions in the House. Public meetings had been held for days anterior, in various parts of the country, and in the metropolis, at most of which resolutions were passed, declaring the tax to be inquisitorial, vexatious, oppressive, and unjust, and calling for a general revision of our whole fiscal system. The Chancellor of the Exchequer met Mr. Hume's proposition with a decided negative; stating that if the House refused him the means of making the income equal to the expenditure, it would be the first step towards revolution, and that he would be no party to it.

Upon this occasion the whole principle of the income tax underwent discussion, not simply with reference to its imposition for one year—for three—or in perpetuity—but with regard to the arbitrary relief of all persons

with incomes of £149. 19s. per annum, who might be considerably richer than others with thrice the income, and with six times the claims upon them ; and also with regard to the gross unfairness of making the precarious incomes of professional men, dependent upon life and health, equally liable to the tax with the realized property of capitalists. The easy *nonchalance* with which the government, adopting Sir Robert Peel's measure with all its faults, asserted that the inequalities of the tax were irremediable, and that no plan could be devised for fairly calculating the value of professional and precarious incomes, gave especial umbrage. It seemed as if the government were wantonly trifling with the little popularity it enjoyed, and gratuitously piling up difficulties in its own way—to embarrass it seriously at a future time.

Mr. Labouchere said that he found much less objection to the income tax when it was originally proposed and subsequently continued, than he anticipated ; and he believed that in the actual state of the finances, the people would not be opposed to the renewal of a tax which was requisite to maintain the credit of the country.

Mr. B. Osborne argued strongly against the income tax, and quoted Mr. Labouchere's and Mr. C. Buller's denunciations of it, when it was proposed by Sir R. Peel, although now, when in office themselves, they considered it to be a burden which the people ought to submit to. He stated that the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Secretary at War, were equally strenuous in condemning the tax when first introduced, and that they grounded their opposition to it on the assumption that it would drive capital abroad, and thus lessen the means of employment for the people.

Sir Robert Peel, seeing his measure so vehemently attacked, arose, on the first night of the debate upon Mr. Hume's amendment, and made an elaborate vindication of his govern-

ment in originally imposing the tax. He also defended, with less than his usual success, the principle of making precarious incomes equally liable with realized property, to this particular impost. In the course of his speech he took especial care to express his approval of the conduct of the British government with reference to the affairs of France; and also to vindicate himself against a charge of inconsistency, if not of double-dealing, which had been brought against him in consequence of a letter to some individuals in Elbing, in which he declared that the income tax was a permanent, and not a temporary measure.\*

“I think,” said the right honourable baronet, “that it is important, in considering the question, whether the income tax shall now be continued for three years, that

\* The inhabitants of the town of Elbing, in Prussia, having addressed a letter of congratulation to Sir Robert Peel on the successful termination of his efforts for the establishment of free trade, received the following reply to their memorial. It appeared originally in the Berlin newspapers, from whence it was copied into the London daily journals:—

“London, August 6, 1846.

“Your address, in which you express your approbation of the great measures of financial and commercial reform which I have considered it my duty to lay before parliament, I have received with great pleasure. The object of the Income-tax was not only to make good a deficit, but also to lay the foundation of a more just system of taxation, by putting an end to duties before levied on raw materials, as well as those vexatious regulations of the excise, and the duties on many kinds of produce necessary to the working classes. The bill having for its object the limitation of the paper currency, has in no way affected public or individual interest, nor has the country been thereby deprived of the advantages of a paper circulation; but in placing the issue of this medium of exchange under certain reasonable restraints, the bill has been the means of checking abuse in times of great critical importance to the commercial interests of the country, as well as of unusual speculation. This bill has given to paper money a settled value, in making it always exchangeable with specie. I learn with pleasure that the intent and effect of these measures have been properly appreciated by distinguished politicians of other countries.

“That part of your address wherein you admit the principle of commercial legislation, which, by order of parliament, is now in force, has afforded me, above all things, the most lively satisfaction. The measures proposed for the diminution of Custom-House duties have been brought forward without any



we should not exclude altogether from our consideration the circumstances under which that tax was imposed in 1842, and renewed in the year 1845; and I feel it incumbent upon me, after the reflections which have been cast upon the tax itself, and upon the motives and conduct of those by whom it was imposed, to vindicate from the

similar concessions having been offered by foreign countries; they have been proposed because the general interest of the country demanded it. Their effects are sufficiently advantageous to fully justify the steps we have taken, for it is contrary to the principles of political economy to purchase at a dear rate articles of inferior value; and the authors of this measure have thought, without entering into negotiations and minute details, that the principles of their commercial legislation would be adopted by other nations. Difficulties and obstacles may arise, and financial embarrassments, which appears to be the strongest argument in support of the protective system, will, in certain countries, be advanced as a reason for continuing it. Individuals who profit by high duties are favourably listened to by the government; in other cases they form the most numerous part of the population, or at least a powerful party in the legislative assemblies.

“Interests are thus represented *en masse*; but this isolated interest cannot long offer resistance to the arguments and manifest interest of the great social body. The public finances labour under a double disadvantage: first, by the prejudice with which they are regarded, and the consequent support offered to smuggling; and secondly, by the great expenses incurred in its suppression, so that, eventually, it will be seen by those who are responsible for the financial condition of their respective countries, that it is prudent and politic to replace, by such moderate duties as will permit the commerce and revenue of the country to increase, those high duties which either diminish, or altogether prohibit, the importation of foreign produce, and sustain certain branches of trade at the expense of the public finances.

“The social condition of that country which maintains with the greatest rigour the protective system, will be opposed to the state of another which has adopted liberal principles, and the conviction of the value of such principles will not obtain, unless by the encouragement of the freedom of exchange amongst all the nations of the world; the well-being of each individual will be increased, and the will of Providence will be fulfilled—that Providence which has given to every country a sun, a climate, and a soil; each differing one from the other, not for the purpose of rendering them severally independent of each other, but, on the contrary, in order that they may feel their reciprocal dependence, by the exchange of their respective produce, thus causing them to enjoy in common the blessings of Providence. It is thus that we find in commerce the means of advancing civilization, of appeasing jealousy and national prejudice, and of bringing about a universal peace, either from national interest or from Christian duty.—I have the honour, &c., ROBERT PEEL.”

aspersions of opponents the government by which this tax was proposed to parliament, and the House of Commons which, by immense majorities, consented to its original imposition. If, sir, they believe all they have heard, this House of Commons, or rather those members of it who had no place in the last parliament, cannot but have formed a strange opinion of the conduct of their predecessors, and must be filled with surprise and astonishment that it was possible for any minister to have persuaded a legislature to consent to the imposition of the tax we are discussing. The honourable member who spoke last, says the tax was 'smuggled' through parliament. Smuggled through parliament! Smuggle an income-tax imposing a burden of five millions on the people! Smuggled through parliament! If you—the House of Commons—are ashamed of the vote by which this tax was passed, rescind it! If new events have occurred convincing you that the policy was wrong, alter the policy; it must always be wise to accept the guidance of experience; it must always be absurd to maintain a system which occurrences prove unsound. But it is a gross reflection upon the late House of Commons to insinuate, as has been done to-night, that this measure was 'smuggled' through parliament; and it is an equally injurious imputation upon those who imposed the tax to say, that they concealed the real motives of their conduct! By overwhelming majorities the tax was assented to. An honourable member\* told us the other night that he was 'fascinated' into supporting it. A representative of a large and important constituency makes the humiliating avowal that he allowed a tax imposing a burden of five millions upon the people of England to pass this House, not because of his deliberate conviction of its justice and propriety, but because he was 'fascinated' into supporting it! Another honourable member says it was

\* The member for Finsbury.

'smuggled' through the House. Why did you permit it? Can it be possible that members of large constituencies allowed so important a measure to pass in such a manner? Sir, on their behalf I repel the imputation. I conceive that there never was an imputation more ill-founded. I believe that there were great and important considerations of financial and commercial policy which induced you to assent to this tax, in place of increasing the indirect taxation of the country. Let me review what occurred.

"I was appointed to office in 1841. If, in what I am about to say, I appear to draw any invidious contrast between the late and the present government, let me at once disclaim any intention of so doing. One of my motives for giving my support to this measure is, because of the great difficulties of the position in which the government are placed. That is one of my motives for supporting the measure. But in vindication of the late House of Commons, I must state what is the truth. I will endeavour to make that statement from memory without troubling the House by referring to statistics. In 1841 the government with which I was connected succeeded to power. There was a deficit in the revenue. It was not an occasional and casual deficit. In 1838, if I recollect rightly, there had been a deficiency of £1,500,000. In 1839 there was a deficiency of half a million. In 1840 a further deficiency of £1,500,000. In 1841 the deficiency amounted to no less than £2,400,000. My estimate in 1842 was, that if no great effort were made, and if the estimates were to be continued at the same rate until 1843, my estimate was that we should have in that year a further deficiency of £2,600,000. On the 5th of April in that year, if my calculations were correct, we should have had an accumulation of deficit amounting to no less than ten millions sterling money! That was the financial condition of the country! What had taken place? The House of Commons, when they assented

to a fiscal alteration, which could not be resisted except on fiscal considerations; the House of Commons, when they assented to an alteration of the post-office duties, professed a fixed determination to support the public credit. They declared that there should be no deficiency. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, in fulfilment of that pledge, had proposed to parliament an addition of five per cent upon the customs and excise duties, and had proposed that ten per cent should be added to the assessed taxes. What had been the result of these additions to the general taxation? If I recollect rightly, the Chancellor of the Exchequer estimated that the five per cent added to the customs and excise duties would produce about £1,900,000. The actual income was, on the most favourable calculation, not more than £700,000. Consequently, there was a deficiency, comparing the estimate with the proceeds, of not less £1,300,000. But what had taken place as regarded the addition to the assessed taxes? The estimate was, that £262,000 would be the produce of the ten per cent additional taxation upon this branch; but the actual produce was £300,000. There consequently was evidence that indirect taxation had reached its limit, whilst a direct taxation could bear a further impost.

“I ask, then, was it the more wise in 1842 to resort to direct taxation to supply our deficiencies, or to seek for a renewal of indirect taxes, such as the reimposition of the duties upon salt and leather, and other articles of general consumption? On that financial ground—guided by that great financial consideration—the house took the view that the income-tax was advisable. That tax was not ‘smuggled’ through the house. It was assented to after long debates, after strenuous opposition, upon the firm conviction that indirect taxation offered no opportunities of supplying the deficiency equal to the opportunity resulting from the imposition of that tax. But I have said that there were also



commercial considerations which swayed the house. What was the commercial position of the country? There existed a complete prohibition on the importation of those animals which formed part of the means of human subsistence. Not a cow, not a sheep, not a bullock could be admitted! But this was not all. On bacon there was a duty of £1. 8s. per cwt.; on hams, £1. 8s. per cwt.; on rice, a duty of 7s. a quarter; on salted pork, a duty of 12s. a barrel; on salted beef the same; nay, there was even a duty of 2s. a cwt. on potatoes; and well I remember that when I proposed to reduce that duty, there were the greatest remonstrances from the growers of the root, and the loudest prophecies of total ruin to all the districts in which it was cultivated! But, to go beyond this, what was the state of the Corn Law at that time? If the price of wheat was 67s. 11d. a quarter, a duty was imposed of 18s. 8d.; if the price was 63s. 11d., the duty was £1. 3s. 8d.; if it was 62s. 11d., there was a duty of £1. 4s. 11d. I greatly modified all these duties. I proposed also to remove all prohibitions upon the admission of other classes of articles, and to permit their importation at certain specified rates. I proposed to admit all raw materials at rates of duty not exceeding five per cent; to admit all goods partially manufactured at rates not exceeding twelve per cent; and all goods wholly manufactured I proposed to admit at rates not exceeding twenty per cent. Those propositions were acceded to after repeated discussions. To supply the deficiency thus created in the revenue, I proposed an income-tax to last until 1845. In that year it would have expired in the ordinary course of things. But looking now at the events of that year, I beg to recall to the recollection of the house what was the statement I then made. I told the house that in that year there would be a surplus of revenue amounting to five millions. I stated that if they allowed the income-tax to expire, there would

be in 1846 a surplus of £2,600,000. I stated at the same time, that in the opinion of her Majesty's government it was advisable to add greatly to our naval estimates. The progress of steam-navigation—the impossibility of repairing our steam-vessels in the Channel—the unfitness of our ports for steam-navigation—rendered it in our opinion advisable to lay the foundation of those works which have since been carried on. We thought it also advisable to add to the number of our men in the navy. I stated that to the house before I asked them to renew the income-tax. I told them that it was open to them either to abandon the income-tax or to retain it, dispensing with duties upon other articles. I said, if you retain the tax, you will have a surplus of £3,600,000. I asked, in what manner will you apply that surplus? I entreated the house seriously to consider whether or no they were prepared to repeal the income-tax, or, retaining that tax, to repeal the excise-duties on glass, &c., and to make an alteration of the sugar-duties. So far from taking the house by surprise, those propositions were fully submitted to their consideration. The house affirmed the increase of the estimates; they affirmed the renewal of the income-tax; they affirmed the repeal of taxes which involved a gross loss of two millions to the revenue; a loss of £600,000 on glass, of £680,000 on cotton, of £300,000 upon the auction duty; together with other items, making a total loss to the revenue, which it was impossible to recover by any indirect taxation of the same sort, to the extent of not less than two millions at the least. It was with a full cognizance of all these facts, that the House of Commons consented to the scheme. Now, it has been said that I concealed the real objects with which I made those propositions. It has been said that, addressing myself subsequently to a body of merchants in a distant town, the subjects of another country, I made a declaration at variance with my

then expressed opinions. Why, I utterly deny it. Why, I have seen in the newspapers a letter purporting to be written by me, which, in the first place, appeared to have been a German translation of what I did write, and then an English re-translation of the German edition. I am little desirous to repel these attacks; I care little about them; but here is the letter I really did write, which is that I apprehend by which I am bound:—

“ ‘The property-tax was intended’—that is not the commencement of the letter, but I suppose I need not read what does not refer to the subject. I received an address from these gentlemen, and I wrote to thank them for it. After expressing my thanks, I proceeded—‘The property-tax was intended not merely to supply a deficit in the revenue as compared with the public expenditure, but to lay the foundation of juster principles of taxation, to afford means for repealing duties on the raw materials of important manufactures, for exempting useful branches of domestic industry from vexatious regulations of excise, and for remitting taxation from several articles imported from abroad, which are essential to the comfort and enjoyment of the industrious classes of the country.’

“That was what I wrote; and I beg to ask if that was not in direct coincidence with all I had ever declared, and if I was not fully justified in saying that my object was to ‘lay the foundation of juster principles of taxation?’ There were twelve hundred articles of consumption subject to duties which led to restrictions and regulations much more onerous even than the taxes themselves. On seven hundred of those articles the duties were reduced, and on five hundred they were entirely repealed. Was not that the foundation of a great commercial change?

“If you say to me, ‘You did not use words to that effect in this house,’—I reply, that the very words of the letter are

identical with words which I used in debate. On the 23d of March, 1842, an intimation having been thrown out that the government were not in earnest in proposing the change, and that I had not asserted or implied that the government staked their existence upon the success of their measures—on the 23d of March, 1842, I used the following words in debate:—‘I propose this as a measure which involves the fate of the government. To have made such a declaration appears to me scarcely necessary. I do propose it—I speak not of minor details, but of the measure itself—as the basis of the financial and commercial policy of this country’—(loud cries of hear, hear)—Well, there is a difference certainly between ‘basis’ and ‘foundation.’ I leave you to make the most of it—‘and as a measure which I never could have consented to propose if I did not manifest my conviction of its necessity by risking my fate as a minister on it. The more I consider the subject, the more deeply am I convinced that this measure, and the measures which accompany it, are necessary for the welfare of the country.’

“Those are the exact expressions which I used in 1842. I did then certainly express a strong doubt if it would not be better to continue the tax for five years rather than for three, but I expressed a sanguine hope that at the end of five years it would be possible to repeal it. And when 1845 came my anticipations were realized, for I was able to show you in that year that there was a surplus of £5,000,000—that the buoyancy of the revenue was such as nearly to supply the void which had previously existed, and that it was then in your power, had you so pleased, to have repealed the tax, instead of adopting a measure for the increase of the estimates and the remission of duties upon other articles. It was with a full knowledge of all these facts that the House consented in 1845 to a revival of the tax of 1842. Now if the House regret this, as I said before, I must obviously con-



cede their right to express that regret, and to take a different course, but I do not want to shelter myself under their authority. So long as I live I shall never repent that I proposed this alteration in the commercial policy of the country, and induced the House of Commons, not by fascination, not by smuggling, but by a full and explicit statement of facts, to impose and to continue the direct tax in question, in lieu of the repealed and reduced taxes to which I have referred.

“I have made this statement in justice to those who, however they fell off from me in 1846, were my cordial supporters in 1845. There is nothing further from my wish than to revive any of the discussions of 1846; but we must draw a clear line of distinction between the commercial line of policy of 1845 and that of 1846. Now, there were some predictions made at the time of the income-tax being proposed, which it is not immaterial to recall. We were told that the substitution of direct for indirect taxation to the extent which I proposed was most unwise, and that, though we might receive a large sum as income-tax, we should find a material counterbalance in the falling off in other taxes, as for example, in the assessed taxes. Now, such has not been the case. In 1842, before the direct tax, the income-tax, was imposed, there was received of assessed taxes, £4,190,000. In 1847, after the several years’ collection of the direct tax, the income-tax, there were received, of assessed taxes, £4,334,000, so that, so far from there being a falling off in assessed taxes, on account of the simultaneous imposition of the income-tax, there was an increase of considerably more than £100,000. In 1842 and 1845, I meant to lay down no principle with reference to the proportion which direct taxation should bear to indirect taxation: I simply said then, as I say now, that I thought the imposition of three per cent, on the income of the country, as a substitute for the taxes

repealed or reduced on articles of subsistence, on the raw materials of manufactures, or articles which peculiarly lead to smuggling—would be a beneficial substitute. I am quite aware that there are limits to the imposition of direct taxation. I do not agree with those who would substitute direct for indirect taxation as a general principle. In times of peace I am not at all prepared to say that I could wish—except for special and temporary purposes—to carry direct taxation to any much greater extent than we have now carried it. I am quite ready to admit that there are great evils accompanying direct taxation. There is a strong inducement, no doubt, in evil times, to derive revenue from direct rather than from indirect taxation; but I am not prepared to assent to a general rule for the substitution, though it is one accordant, I believe, with the opinions of very many members of this House. I admit that there are many cases of individual hardship under the income-tax, as there are under every tax that is raised, but I do not admit the hardship of the principle upon which we now proceed. I think the tax ought to be distinctly a tax upon income. If, indeed, you wanted to make some great national effort, for some distinct national purpose, then you might apply to capital: if you wanted, for example, by a great national effort, to pay off all or a part of the national debt. I do not say this were a desirable effort, but if you desired to make it, then you must apply to realized capital; but I am now speaking of annual exertions to meet annual demands, and the direct tax towards these annual demands, I say, after long consideration of the subject, ought to be an income-tax, without any distinction between the different sources whence it is derived. I would never consent to relieve incomes derived from trade, or incomes derived from professions, for the purpose of throwing an invidious, and, as I think, unjust, burden on what is called realized property.

The taxes which had been repealed or reduced, fell certainly as heavy upon the tradesman and upon the professional man, as upon the owner of realized property. There is no distinction made between these various classes in the duties upon articles of luxury, in the window duties, in the assessed taxes : why, as to the income-tax, are you to throw the whole or main onus upon real property? To say nothing of the pledged faith we owe to funded property, every reason of policy is against the oppressing that class of property with a heavier share of taxation than is called for from trading or professional incomes, in the way of direct taxation. In a word, I consider that no principle can be more just, or more free from objection, than that which we have acted upon ; and I should greatly dread the introduction of any other principle.

“I come now to the question raised by the honourable member opposite, whether or no it is expedient that this tax should be continued for three years, or only for one year. I shall give my decided support to the government in maintaining the tax for the period of three years. The honourable member for Montrose says one year only ; and with his opinion, that an immense reduction may be effected in the extent of our naval and military forces, that proposition is consistent enough ; but how the honourable member for Warwickshire can vote for the one-year amendment, I do not so well understand. This honourable gentleman announces that he shall give his cordial support to government in maintaining the full complement of forces they judge necessary under existing circumstances. Now, if these forces are to be so maintained—and I am decidedly of opinion that they should be—I cannot foresee such a reduction in the estimates as will enable us to dispense with the income-tax on the 5th April, 1849. True, the honourable member for Warwickshire, while he said he would retain the full naval and military complements, intimated there were other items

on which great reductions could be made ; but, on coming to particulars, we find that the honourable member's contemplated retrenchments apply just to the subject of educational charities, and to money paid to the honourable member for Bolton for inquiring into an improved mode of keeping the national accounts. Now, as to the money paid to the honourable gentleman opposite, that is clearly irrecoverable. And as to the other possible retrenchment of the honourable member for Warwickshire, I don't believe it would realize a saving of £1,000 a-year—manifestly a small matter. That large reductions may be made in the details of the naval and military expenditure, I am clearly of opinion ; and I am equally of opinion, that economy in the details of other departments may be introduced. Nor would I advocate the continuance of the income-tax for three years, if I thought its continuance would operate against the most strict and searching inquiry into the economy which may be effected in all the public departments ; but, at the same time, I would have the House and the country feel that there is a degree of economy which in the end proves anything but economical. In 1835 the estimates indeed were lower than they have been since ; but, observe, we were very shortly afterwards compelled to raise them very materially. I shall support the government proposition, because, while deeply impressed with the necessity for economy, I am, on the other hand, as deeply impressed with the essential necessity of maintaining the public credit. Gentlemen opposite, indeed say, 'Oh, as to the public credit, there can be no question about maintaining that ; we propose to revise the whole system of taxation, to apportion the taxes more equally, but we entirely concur in the universal feeling as to the necessity of maintaining the public credit.' Yes, very true ; but I would rather have the income-tax in reserve, before we set about considering an amended system of taxation. If a new



system of taxation were to be proposed in February next, with the certainty of the income-tax expiring on the 5th of April following, notwithstanding the profession of your determination to support the public credit, I should be rather apprehensive on the subject, should the new scheme by any possibility turn out a failure. On the other hand, should the new scheme answer, it will be very easy to repeal the income-tax. At all events, the facts of this reserve against necessity will give the opportunity for more mature consideration of the subject, without shaking the confidence of the public creditor. I cannot conceive it possible that there will be such a reduction in our public expenditure as will enable us to dispense with five millions of revenue; nor do I think it likely that you will be prepared by next February with any scheme which will produce you such an amount at so little cost in the collection, and so little onerous in itself, as is the tax now before us. Had the government found it absolutely necessary to persevere in the larger taxation they at first proposed, in order to avoid debt in time of peace, so great is my dread of the incurrence of such debt, I would have supported them; but at the same time I am far from blaming them, that after the decided expression of public opinion on the subject, they withdrew the additional two per cent.

“With reference to the probability of an increase in the customs revenue, there was certainly never such a combination of circumstances affecting that revenue as that combination of circumstances which has existed during the past two years, and by which the trading and commercial energies of this country have been paralyzed. I find it, therefore, my duty, in this period of commercial depression, to assert my continued adherence to the principles on which the remissions I effected took place. I have the firmest confidence in the justice of those principles. Their operation has been impeded by that combination of circumstances to

which I have referred, the necessity of supporting the people of one of these islands by ten millions of loan, raised here; the necessity of importing enormous quantities of foreign corn for the consumption of our own people; the derangements, commercial and monetary, which affected our whole commercial and trading community—but these facts, so far from making me regret the proposals which I made respecting the improvement of our commercial policy—so far from making me distrust the principles on which those proposals were made, however disheartening the facts may seem in some respects, have led me to a totally opposite conclusion—have made me rejoice that when the relaxations were proposed, they were adopted. I still retain a confident expectation that the energies of this country will rise superior to its present commercial depression, and that we shall live to see the time when the revenue of the country shall flourish as it did in 1845, and even with increase.

“And here let me observe, that one of my reasons for assenting to the renewal of the income-tax for three years, is precisely the recollection that it was immediately after the year of prosperity to which I refer, that the heavy debt and the paralyzing circumstances under which we now suffer, were thrown upon us. I must own further, that I am influenced in my support of the tax's continuance for three years very materially by reference to the wonderful events which have taken place within a very recent period in a neighbouring country. I regard them as amply justifying this country in not consenting to incur any risk of a large debt in this period of three years. I should feel it to be utterly inconsistent with sound policy, with my sense of duty, to make any detailed reference to events which must have filled all here present with utter astonishment. Of this, let me say, I am perfectly confident, that the true policy of this country will consist in the most complete, the most

absolute abstinence from all interference whatever in the internal affairs of the country in which such a wonderful revolution has taken place. I hope we shall continue to be enabled to exercise the rites of hospitality. I think it is of the utmost importance that this country should always be enabled to offer a refuge to the victims of political convulsions. England has been such in other times, and I trust it will long continue to be so. When the hospitality of this country has been taken advantage of to disturb the peace of other monarchies, I have always protested against such an abuse being permitted to exist; and I am equally ready to take the same course with respect to a republic. I earnestly trust that this place of refuge, and that the hospitality accorded to fugitives in this country, will not be abused, and that all parties will set their faces against any intrigues that may be set on foot: for I hold that the same rule which applied to a monarchy is equally good with respect to a republic. I confess that I heard with the greatest satisfaction the declaration from her Majesty's government that they were resolved to abstain from all interference in the internal affairs of France. If this determination be carefully and strictly observed, it will discourage all other nations from any attempts at interference. I cannot but bear it in my mind whilst regarding the present state of things, that France is at this moment enduring the throes of a great experiment; and I therefore am not disposed to attach any importance to the heats which manifest themselves in the journals of that country. I look with considerable interest at the position of the provisional government that is established, and I cannot refrain from expressing my most earnest hopes that those who may be called upon to govern the destinies of the French people will content themselves with directing their efforts to their own social condition. I sincerely hope that they may succeed in con-

stituting a government which shall be strong and permanent in itself; and that whilst they endeavour to reconcile the perfect independence of their country with the rights secured by existing treaties, they will not set an example of aggression, or of that desire for territorial aggrandisement, which will, if manifested, peril the peace of Europe, and inflict an irreparable injury on the whole of the civilized world."

Lord George Bentinck spoke after Sir Robert Peel; and said, that "if the right honourable baronet never regretted, nor ever would regret, the remissions of protecting duties which he had occasioned; on the other hand, neither he (Lord G. Bentinck) nor any of his friends around him, would ever forget, or cease to regret, their misplaced confidence in the right honourable baronet. They were so entirely deceived, and deluded, and befooled, by the right honourable baronet, that they supported his proposal for an income tax, without ever dreaming that it was to be made the basis of depriving them of all the protecting duties under which they had enjoyed so much prosperity."

His lordship contended that "they must immediately retrace their steps, and abandon this mischievous policy, if they hoped to escape from increasing financial difficulties; and proceeded to argue, that our colonies suffered for the benefit of the foreigner, who was the only party who really profited by the remissions in those protecting duties. With respect to the establishments of the country, he thought it was not safe, in the present state of neighbouring countries, to reduce them; but still he would support the motion of Mr. Hume to limit the income tax to one year, for then they would have the opportunity of again considering the subject. He could not see why they might not add a penny to the postage, instead of continuing the income tax, nor could he see why they should not levy a tax of 25 per cent. on the incomes of those who lived upon the taxes."



So many members were anxious to speak upon the subject, and the question excited so much interest, involving, as it did, the fate of the ministry, and that too at a time when all Europe was in commotion, that it was found necessary to adjourn the debate.

On its renewal, Mr. James Wilson, the member for Westbury, vindicated the free-trade policy of the administration of Sir Robert Peel, and of the government which had succeeded. The question to be decided was, in his estimation, "whether free-trade principles were to be maintained or abandoned. If free trade were to be maintained, it would be indispensable to continue the income tax. He had looked at the estimates, and he was satisfied that no reduction could be made this year. It was more advisable to look at the whole system of our expenditure, rather than to raise objections to payment after expenses had been incurred. He looked with alarm at our increasing financial deficiencies. He was satisfied that government were right in proposing to continue to make up the deficiency from the income tax, and the people were wrong in the opposition they gave to the proposition of the government. He felt confident that two years would not elapse before the people would admit that they were wrong in opposing the increase of the income tax. It was impossible that the deficiency could have been made up by an increase of customs or excise duties. The government had nothing therefore left, but an increased income tax. All taxes were in fact income taxes, and the only question was, in what shape the additional income tax was to be imposed: the income tax, as it existed, was the most suited for the purpose—all the machinery was in existence, and the public mind was reconciled to it. It was said, that the income tax was inquisitorial; but he contended that the people were agreeably disappointed as to its character. The excise laws were infinitely more inquisitorial." The honourable gentleman

concluded a lengthened speech by saying, that he would support the motion for continuing the income tax for three years, and he would have supported the proposition for increasing the tax to five per cent., if the government had persevered in making it.

On the third night of the debate, March 13th, Mr. Cobden observed, that, "although there was no one in the House to whom the temptation might be greater than to himself, to speak on the subject of free trade, he would refrain from deviating into a discussion irrelevant to the question, and tell them once for all, that however frequently gentlemen opposite might declaim against that system, he would not enter into its merits until their 'purposeless railings' were put into a tangible form, and embodied in some measure for the re-establishment of protection. He would tell them, that for the sake of trade, and of the people of this country, it was necessary to extend our commercial transactions, by inviting into Great Britain the productions of foreign countries, but this could only be done by still further reductions of indirect taxes. To enable them to do this, it was essential that they should not endanger the principle of direct taxation. It was because he wished to maintain and perpetuate a system of direct taxation, that he supported the amendment. He wished to make the income tax just, that he might make it permanent. The only question before them was, could they make the income tax a just tax? To show that it could be made so, he adverted to some of the grosser and more obvious inequalities involved in it. The government had not manifested any disposition to remedy its injustice; but if it would appoint a committee to inquire into the whole subject, a plan would speedily be devised whereby the income tax might be adjusted upon a satisfactory basis. He denied that the success of the amendment would, in the slightest degree, endanger the public credit. There would

be no defalcation in the revenue between that time and the ensuing February. Parliament would then re-assemble, and continue, if found necessary, the income tax still longer, even in its present shape. In his judgment, it would not be necessary to do so, as, long before that time, the government might contrive a mode of making the tax much more acceptable to all classes. There would be no defalcation, so far as the manufacturing classes could prevent it. They would wear their last coats before the public creditor should suffer. But it was high time to apply the pruning knife to the expenditure. As to what had happened in a neighbouring country, he drew very different conclusions from those which had been drawn by some. He saw reason in what had occurred, why the government should not depend on numerical majorities in parliament, instead of yielding to the sentiments of the country. We had no need of tumults in England, having those privileges, the want of which was the cause of the revolution in France. The danger was, that the House would not base its legislation on those strict rules of justice and fair dealing which could alone give security to our institutions."

Lord John Russell observed, "that he had heard the most opposite and the strangest reasons urged for the support of the amendment, which embodied no principle, but which was a mere amendment for the purposes of embarrassment. When the tax was first imposed, and when it was renewed, it was quite true that it was only taken for temporary periods; but no promise was ever given that its renewal would not again be demanded under any circumstances whatever; and what were the circumstances which made it necessary to ask for its continuance? They were, in his opinion, such as ought to induce parliament to consent to the renewal of the tax for the period for which it had been granted on former occasions. As to the inequalities of the

tax, whilst there were some which might be revised, there were others, of a still more grievous character, to which the attempt to adjust the tax on any other basis would give rise. They could not make the tax more equal, without making it more inquisitorial; and whilst they made it only half as productive as it now was, they would make it twice as vexatious. The government," his lordship added, "had not been indifferent to the inequalities of the tax. They had endeavoured to make distinctions, but they had found it impossible to do justice to all parties. It had been suggested, that large reductions should be made in the estimates. But was it possible to make such reductions as would enable the House to dispense with the income tax after a year? Such was the question before them, and it was a question to which he gave a decided negative. He thought it necessary, for the sake of the credit of the country, to ask for the tax for three years, so that the proceeds of the year 1849-50 would enable the government to cover any possible deficiency. The estimates had been proposed at a time when everything was tranquil. He would not attempt to prophesy political events at any time, or for any time, least of all at a moment like that. Who could have supposed, when he laid the budget before the House, that a monarchy which then appeared so strong and powerful, would have vanished like a mist in the course of a few weeks? Yet all this had happened. He hoped, nevertheless, to see peace confirmed; but, at the same time, no man could venture to say what time might bring forth; and he, for one, could not consent to disarm under such circumstances. He said this with every wish to see the peace of Europe and of the world preserved, and he saw nothing immediately before them to endanger that peace. But it was the part of wise and prudent men, whilst everything was uncertain, not to affect security, and, whilst there



was nothing but darkness around them, not to affect to be walking in broad daylight. Allusion had been made to the colonies in a former stage of the debate. As to them, he hoped honourable gentlemen would not hastily make up their minds. He had always regarded the colonies as part of the strength of the empire. If that were so, he would not willingly, from any notions of economy and retrenchment, consent to reduce that strength. If it was the wish of England to descend in the scale of nations, she could abridge her colonial dependencies, but he would not be the instrument of her degradation. As to the revision of taxation, there were undoubtedly faults in our fiscal system, which he would be happy to co-operate in removing ; but he could not undertake in any set time, far less in the course of the year, to do anything very material in the way of reduction. He would again warn the House, that by agreeing to the amendment, they would endanger the credit of the country ; and if the House refused to give the government that which they considered necessary to support the public credit, it would be disgraceful in them to remain any longer the ministers of the crown. The members of the government were not blind to the difficulties of the situation in which they were placed, or unaware of the perils which might surround them on every side. If they had the confidence of the House, they might hope to meet and surmount them. But if they were not honoured with that confidence, he hoped the administration of affairs might be placed in other hands, better calculated to carry them on for the welfare and prosperity of her Majesty and her dominions."

The arguments and threat of the prime-minister, in this speech, supported as the former had been by those of Sir Robert Peel, and by the votes of all the party which had gone over with the right honourable baronet on the question of the corn laws, proved sufficient to save the ministry

against the combined attack of the protectionists, and that section of the liberals who took up the question of the income tax on its own merits without reference to its bearing upon free trade. Upon a division, the amendment of Mr. Hume was negatived by 363 votes against 138, leaving the ministry in a majority of 225.

It was his own peculiar question, on which Sir Robert Peel thus threw the shield of his protection over the administration of his rival ; but there is no doubt, that, in doing so, and quite irrespective of the merits or demerits of the income tax, he rendered a public service. The resignation of the ministry at that time would have been exceedingly inopportune, if not disastrous ; and there was a general feeling of satisfaction throughout the country—and even in the minds of those who had no particular affection for the Whig government—that the existing perplexities of European politics were not aggravated by a change of administration in Great Britain.

## CHAPTER XII.

## THE CHARTIST AND REPEAL RIOTS.

THE alarms of the English and French people, as to the probable consequence of the establishment of the French republic upon the relations of the two states, soon subsided. It was not to be imagined that the rulers of this country could place themselves in a position of active hostility towards France, because, in the exercise of her independence, she had chosen to abolish monarchy. It was to be feared, however, that they might show a passive hostility, which would have been almost as dangerous. Happily for the world, this was not the case. The British people maintained a warm sympathy with the French; and the government, comprehending both the duty and the policy of cordiality under such circumstances, recognized the revolution in such a manner as to convince the French people that a firm alliance with England was as possible as it was desirable. Active hostility to France, on the sole ground of her republicanism, was scarcely to be expected from any power in Europe. Such a course would have enlisted the moral sense of mankind in favour of France, and armed the republic with the invincible strength only derivable from justice. But such hostility, if possible with the alienation of Great Britain, became more and more improbable, the more closely the two states were known to be allied; and one danger to the peace of Europe became greatly lessened.

The provisional government, with a proper sense of the deep responsibilities of their position, proclaimed to the world that the desire of France was to govern herself in her own way, and not to conquer other nations; not to nurture her

population to become the instruments of aggression,—but to make France, what no conqueror could ever make her, free, industrious, peaceful, and happy.

The French revolution was acknowledged to have been inevitable, even by those who condemned it. Such corruption as that which prevailed throughout France during the last few years of the reign of Louis Philippe, could produce no result but that which followed. The facts spoke for themselves. The Guizot ministry, under one form or another, was for upwards of seven years in power. The system of Louis Philippe, of which M. Guizot was the ablest and most willing instrument, was during this period in its fullest vigour. Corruption was more rank, bribery more profuse, public men more venal, than at any previous epoch in French history. The capital of the public debt on the 1st of January, 1841, was, in round numbers, £170,000,000. On the 1st of January, 1848, it had increased to £207,000,000; or £37,000,000 in four years. The floating debt was increased in a proportion equally great. From £10,000,000, which was its amount on the accession of Louis Philippe, it was augmented yearly, until, upon his deposition, it was found to have reached within a fraction of £35,000,000. During the last 268 days of its existence, the monarchy expended more than 294,000,000 francs, or upwards of £11,000,000 beyond its income; which was at the rate of £44,000 per day. The war in Algeria swallowed up much of this stupendous sum; and the works undertaken as indirect bribes in various districts which it was necessary to keep in good humour, and to link by the golden chains of self-interest to the fortunes of the dynasty, consumed another large proportion: but the world will probably never know how much of it was expended in direct bribery, and how much found its way into the coffers of the various persons, male and female, patrician and plebeian, native and foreign, who were engaged directly and indirectly in bringing about



the Spanish marriages. Enough of the veil was lifted, to show the hideousness of the corruption that was at work, and the enormous amount of conscience-money that was necessary, to secure and to recompense the instruments of an undertaking so gigantic and so flagitious. "It was not, and it could not come to good." Such a system was of necessity short-lived. Revolution was the inevitable result; and it was, perhaps, fortunate for France that it was not longer delayed. The crash was certain to come, and it would have burst over the land with additional violence, if the corruption and the infamy, the guilt and the profusion, had been continued during the interval, in the same, or even in a diminished, proportion.

The reverberation of this great revolution sounded loudly over the whole continent, during the spring and summer of 1848; it also extended, in somewhat fainter tones, to Great Britain and Ireland. For a time the temper of the people excited great alarm throughout the kingdom. The appeals made to the passions of the multitude by Chartists and Repealers called upon the executive to use the utmost diligence for the suppression of threatened insurrection, and, in the case of Ireland, to apply to the legislature for special enactments, to strengthen the hands of the law. The spirit of revolution which had been first let loose in France, extended rapidly to Germany, Italy, and Hungary, and often led to excesses of the most deplorable character, occasioning a terrible effusion of blood in Berlin and other cities; civil war raged throughout nearly the whole of central Europe; and the popular party in Lombardy and Hungary, as well as in Austria and many of the minor states of Germany, who had long smarted under the tyranny and misgovernment of their rulers, had for a considerable period the complete ascendant.

It was impossible that such examples should pass altogether without effect upon the dissatisfied and voteless portions of the community of the British empire. As in

1793, so in 1848, the ultra liberals of England, and the repealers of Ireland, saw, or fancied they saw, a common cause existing between them and the revolutionizers of continental Europe, and speedily began manifesting their sympathy for the latter, and their discontent on their own account, in street-riots and tumultuous meetings.

The first manifestations of the kind took place about the middle of March, the ostensible ground of complaint being the income tax, then in course of renewal; although it was quickly apparent that the crowds which broke windows and assaulted the police under this pretence, could have little direct personal interest in the matter of an impost which did not attach to incomes under £150 per annum. A riot attended with loss of life took place at Glasgow, and scenes of robbery and outrage were enacted in that city, which were not surpassed by any of the atrocities of the continent. Nevertheless, it must be stated, that several meetings of a more respectable kind took place in various parts of the kingdom, where petitions against the income tax, particularly as affecting incomes derived from trades or professions, and in favour of an extension of the suffrage, were quietly adopted.

Speedily, however, the discontent extended to a wider field; and the charter, with its "five points," became the one great object upon which the disaffected centred their desires of social reform, or unsocial revolution. Monster meetings took place in all the principal manufacturing districts. Regularly-appointed delegates were dispatched to a Chartist convention sitting in London; and a petition to parliament was prepared, the signatures to which were forwarded from the various local committees, for the purpose of being attached to a document, which became certainly the most bulky that ever crossed the threshold of the House of Commons. On the 27th of March, Mr. F. O'Connor entered a notice on the books of the House, that on Monday, the 10th

of April, he would present a petition from the "National Chartists of the Kingdom," and move the following resolution, as an amendment on the first order of the day, "that this House recognizes the principle, that labour is the source of all wealth, that the people are the legitimate source of all power, and that they have the first right to partake of the fruits of their own industry; that taxation without representation is a tyranny which should be resisted; that the resources of the country would be best developed by representatives chosen by the labouring classes living upon the proceeds of sober and industrious pursuits; and that, in recognizing the above great truths, this House will adopt the principles embodied in the people's charter—viz. vote by ballot, annual parliaments, universal suffrage, equal electoral districts, and the payment of members."

At first it was intended that this petition should have been brought to the doors of the House, accompanied by a huge procession of Chartists, delegates and others, who began assembling in town, from the provincial districts, for the purpose. But this intention, which appeared to threaten the peace of the metropolis, was peremptorily prohibited by the government, who took vigorous measures for the purpose of resisting the attempt, should it be made in defiance of their authority. The 10th of April, the day fixed for this "imposing demonstration," was looked forward to with much curiosity by all; and by some, with anxiety and alarm. Meantime detachments of troops were brought into town, who, as well as large bodies of police, were located in certain quarters selected for the purpose, along the line of the intended procession, more particularly at the bridges where it would have to pass, both on its way to and from Kennington Common, the intended scene of the proceedings. Moreover, all the well-affected members of the community were invited by proclamation to enrol themselves as special

constables, as much for the protection of their own properties, as of the public peace, the police in great measure being withdrawn from their usual districts, to the point of threatened disturbance. Upwards of 150,000 men of all ranks responded to this call, and, being duly sworn in, paraded the streets in bodies the entire day, armed with staves hurriedly made for the occasion.

The result of that day was exactly what most of the sober-minded and well-informed classes of the community had predicted it would be. The upper and middle classes opposed it—the educated among the working-classes kept aloof—and many thousands of artisans and labouring men enrolled themselves, with the utmost alacrity, as special constables. The intended demonstration, which was to have been the first step in a great revolutionary march, turned out a signal failure. The members of the “national convention” having assembled on Kennington Common, attended by a mob of some 10,000 or 15,000 persons, speedily, on the appearance of the police, abandoned the intended “demonstration,” and the “monster petition” was conveyed in three carts to the House of Commons. Mr. Feargus O'Connor was one of the first to quit the ground, upon the summons of the authorities. He was in his place at the opening of the House, and duly presented the petition, which he said was signed by 5,706,000 persons. He also at the same time presented a petition signed by 30,000 persons, praying for the adoption of “the charter.”

Lord Morpeth, upon the presentation of the petitions, rose, and said, that “Sir G. Grey, who was in attendance upon his official duties, had commissioned him to inform the House, that whatever might be his sentiments as to the prayers of these petitions, he would never be wanting in respect to any petitions emanating from large bodies of the people.” The following Friday was then fixed for taking the monster peti-



tion into consideration, and so the matter rested until that time. On the Thursday, some extraordinary revelations were made upon the subject, which led to an animated scene in the House, and eventually caused the abandonment of all further proceedings in regard to the petition.

On the evening in question, Mr. Thornely brought up a special report from the committee on public petitions, stating that a gross abuse of the right of petition had taken place in the case of the Chartist petition. Mr. F. O'Connor had stated that it was signed by 5,706,000 persons, whereas it had only 1,975,496 signatures attached to it. Of these, whole pages were written by the same hand, while in numerous instances the names were gross forgeries. One of the signatures was "*Victoria Rex*," another was "the Duke of Wellington," and in many cases the most offensive and disgusting words stood in the place of signatures.

Mr. F. O'Connor said, "If a select committee were granted, he would prove the report to be incorrect. He added, that, in fact, there were more than 5,000,000 of *bonâ fide* signatures to the petition; and he would before long present a petition signed by three times that number of people. He had no doubt the fictitious signatures might be traced to the spy system established by the government."

Mr. Cripps, a member of the committee, observed, "that his attention had been called to this petition by the audacious assertion of Mr. O'Connor, that it was signed by 5,700,000 persons—a number considerably larger than the adult population above 21 years of age in this country! When that assertion was made, he was not aware that the petition had been signed by women; but on taking up one of the sheets at random, he found the names of several women attached to it. He had then desired the clerks to examine the signatures in some sheets, taken also at random, and they had ascertained that out of every 100,000 names

8,200 were those of women. Mr. O'Connor had stated in his place, that the petition weighed five tons. The committee on petitions had weighed it in the scales ; and its weight was only  $5\frac{1}{2}$  cwt. At any rate, it had been brought to the House in three crazy cabs. He did not wish to throw ridicule on the petitioners, but on Mr. O'Connor he wished to throw both ridicule and obloquy. He wanted to know whether another meeting was to be held, to sanction such a mass of ribaldry, obscenity, and impiety, as was to be found in this Chartist petition. The name of the Duke of Wellington was signed to it nineteen times, and every time with the most indecent allusions ; so, too, was the name of Colonel Sibthorp. One of the sheets of the petition also contained this avowal, — ' We could not get paid for any more signatures to-day.' If he had stumbled on these facts when the petition was presented, he should certainly have submitted that it ought not to be received. Mr. O'Connor now said, that he could have got the petition signed by three times as many names. The males of England above 15 years of age were only 7,000,000 ; but he had no doubt that if Mr. O'Connor used the same machinery to obtain names, he could get it signed, by similar fabrications, by 500,000,000 names."

Mr. F. O'Connor said, " he by no means held himself accountable for everything contained in every petition he presented to that House. As to the personalities of Mr. Cripps, he would answer them elsewhere." Mr. O'Connor then bowed to the Speaker, and withdrew.

Several members called the Speaker's attention to the fact, that Mr. O'Connor had left the House, and, in their opinion, for the purpose of sending a hostile message to Mr. Cripps. An order was issued for Mr. O'Connor to appear in his place forthwith, and at a subsequent period of the evening, the messenger returned, and informed the House that he had seen Mr. O'Connor, and served him with

the order of the Speaker. In the course of the debate which followed, the Serjeant-at-arms announced that Mr. O'Connor was in custody. Sir G. Grey then moved that Mr. O'Connor should be immediately discharged, in order that he might attend in his place. This was agreed to, and the honourable member soon afterwards took his place. The Speaker then called on Mr. Cripps to retract the unparliamentary words he had used ; which he did in a very handsome manner.

Mr. O'Connor exculpated the Speaker from any want of attention to the duties of his office, and accepted the words of Mr. Cripps, as a sufficient excuse for the offensive words which he had used. He had now a higher duty to perform, which was to inform the House that he should abandon his motion for taking the Chartist petition into consideration on the following day. He would not practise any delusion upon the House himself, nor be accessory to the practice of any delusion by others. He left the petition between the House and the country, and also between the committee and those who signed it.

The more violent and unreasoning members of the Chartist body, so far from being discouraged from further proceedings by the ludicrous and humiliating termination of their attempt to obtain a hearing in the House of Commons, continued to hold assemblies throughout the kingdom, where language of the most improper character was used. Collisions with the authorities frequently occurred, and some lives were sacrificed. The dangerous aspect of these combinations was aggravated by a fact which became pretty well known, that the Repealers of Ireland had come to an agreement to "sympathize," or co-operate, with the Chartists in England and Scotland ; and the ramifications of their combined operations, made themselves felt from one end of the kingdom to the other.

Mr. Hume, after the failure of the Chartist petition, took an opportunity to give notice of a motion for the 23d of May, for the extension of the suffrage, and the division of the country into electoral districts. On that evening, however, in consequence of the lateness of the hour, he announced his intention of postponing it until the first vacant evening, which happened to be the 20th of June. This was the signal for Mr. Feargus O'Connor to charge Mr. Hume with an intention of "juggling the people;" and to protest that "he, for his own part, would henceforth be no party to a proceeding, which he could only regard as a mockery, a delusion, and a snare." Mr. Cobden defended Mr. Hume, and advised him, if he wished for success, not to be guided either by the advice or the example of the honourable member for Nottingham. "He had a lengthened knowledge of the honourable gentleman, and he believed he had done more to prevent the working classes from obtaining what they wanted, by the only means by which they could succeed, than any other public man in this country had ever done."—Lord John Russell expressed his belief that the mass of the working people neither wished for the plan of Mr. O'Connor nor for that of Mr. Hume.

The premier's rebuke, however, did not settle the question out of doors, where a current of popular feeling seemed, for awhile, to have set in, for the purpose of obtaining some degree of parliamentary reform. Independently of the demands of the Chartist delegates, a numerous and respectable party declared its approval of the more moderate scheme of reform,—of which household suffrage, triennial parliaments, and the abolition of the borough and county divisions, were the principal features. Innumerable meetings of townships and parishes, duly convened, took place in all parts of the kingdom, in favour of this scheme of reform.



At length, on the 20th June, Mr. Hume moved a resolution, to the effect, that the House of Commons did not "fairly represent the population, the property, or the industry of the country, whence had arisen great and increasing discontent in the minds of a large portion of the people; and it was therefore expedient, with a view to amend the national representation, that the elective franchise should be so extended as to include householders; that votes should be taken by ballot; that the duration of parliaments should not exceed three years; and that the apportionment of members to population should be made more equal."

The motion was opposed by Lord John Russell, who, however, admitted that "the public attention was turned to the consideration of such subjects, and that the time might not be far distant when some reforms might be usefully effected. They might soon be in possession," he added, "of sufficient information to enable them to extend the franchise, without compromising the basis of our representative system. He was therefore not disposed to say that they could not, and might not, beneficially improve the reform act. But if he was asked whether he was prepared to bring in at that moment any measure for such a purpose, he would unhesitatingly reply, that he was not prepared to introduce any considerable measure of the kind. He could not agree with Mr. Hume, that this was a good time for the introduction of a large measure of reform. The House represented, and, since the reform act, had faithfully represented, the nation; and it was due to the nation, on that occasion, that it should give a determined negative to the proposition just submitted to it."

The declaration of the prime-minister was so far satisfactory to the House, that it led to the postponement, *sine die*, of any extension of the suffrage; Mr. Hume's





Robert D. Hamilton

Hamarting

motion, the discussions upon which were protracted by repeated disappointments and consequent postponements, being finally, on the 6th July, negatived by an overwhelming majority:—84 only voting in favour of it, and 351 against it.

While in England the violent Chartists were committed to prison, and the more moderate reformers were taught the virtue of patience, in Ireland the tide of disaffection ran much higher than on this side of the channel, and language of the most treasonable kind was uttered and printed, the avowed object being to excite the people to rebellion against the authority of the British crown. A grand demonstration of sympathy in support of the French revolutionary party, was announced to take place in Dublin on the 20th of March, but it proved a failure; and a deputation of “sympathizers,” who subsequently went over to France with a fraternal address, met with a calm and dignified reception from M. de Lamartine, the head of the provisional government, who, after thanking them for the trouble they had taken in coming to France, plainly told them to go back, and behave as peaceable and dutiful subjects.

The violent, if not rabid speeches of Mr. Smith O’Brien, the member for Limerick, and those of Mr. Meagher, Mr. Mitchell, and their companions, daily assumed a character more treasonable and dangerous. Large portions of the working classes throughout the country, acting under the advice of these orators and journalists, began to provide themselves with fire-arms, pikes, and other weapons. Large quantities of them were ordered in Birmingham, and elsewhere; so large, that the manufacturers were unable to keep pace with the demand.

Regular meetings of organized bodies of men took place daily for rifle practice, and for the drilling of volunteers in military tactics.



It was soon found that the existing state of the law in Ireland was not strong enough to crush the growing evil, and accordingly, on the 7th of April, the government brought in a bill for the better protection of the crown and government. Sir G. Grey, after adverting to the manner in which the freedom of discussion had been violated in Ireland, said it was necessary to bring in a bill to alter the law, to meet the case. He then read extracts from the speeches and writings of the confederates, in proof of his statement. The law in Ireland was inadequate to bring these proceedings within the charge of treason, though they would clearly be treasonable in England. He therefore proposed to bring in a bill to assimilate the law in both countries. The bill was based upon the 36th George III., but the penalty of death was confined to the compassing and imagining the death of the Queen. The other offences defined as treason by that act were to be punished by transportation for life, or, at the discretion of the court, for a period of not less than seven years. To the offences included within this penalty was added the act of uttering or publishing open and advised speeches designing to compass or imagine the death of the sovereign.

After some discussion, the measure was carried through the House of Commons by a large majority, 283 voting for it, and only 24 against it. It was passed with all possible speed through the House of Lords, and became the law of the land on the 20th of the same month.

Shortly afterwards Mr. Mitchell was convicted under this statute of publishing treasonable matter, and was transported for 14 years. The example of this misguided individual, so far from deterring others, seemed only to incite the most forward of the malcontent party to still more daring acts of rebellion. Mr. Smith O'Brien, Mr. Mcagher, and others, did not hesitate to proclaim open war against the govern-

ment, and to preach the necessity of armed resistance. Under the influence of these foolish and guilty men, the whole country was speedily in commotion; bodies of armed peasants paraded the southern parts of Ireland, Mr. Smith O'Brien avowedly acting as their leader. The most alarming reports arrived at the seat of government from all quarters, and an open outbreak appeared to be imminent, when ministers again saw the necessity of applying to parliament for further power, and on the 22nd of July, Lord John Russell moved for leave to bring in a bill to empower the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland to apprehend suspected persons; in other words, a bill to suspend the Habeas Corpus act in Ireland, the evident occasion for which was so strong, that the standing orders having been suspended for the purpose, in both Houses, it was finally passed on the 24th, and was immediately put into force.

The apprehension and conviction of Mr. Smith O'Brien, Meagher, O'Gorman, and others their associates, and their transportation beyond the seas, proceedings attended with no little excitement at the time, finally relieved the country from the troublous apprehensions under which it had so long laboured in this portion of her Majesty's dominions. Several of the leaders of the Chartist riots in England and Scotland were also convicted, and sentenced to various terms of transportation or imprisonment. Comparative order was at length restored, and the quiet English people were left to grumble at the constitution, as occasion demanded, and as they consider it their privilege to be allowed to do; but to cherish the conviction at the same time, that, notwithstanding its faults, it was not to be rudely and irreverently mended, and that, imperfect as it might be, it had the merit of efficacy, and bore within its own bosom the germs of a gradual improvement.

## CHAPTER XIII.

## NAVIGATION LAWS—THE WEST INDIES AND THE SUGAR DUTIES.

THE recommendation in the speech from the throne, at the opening of the session, that the Navigation Laws should be taken into consideration with a view to their modification or repeal, gave satisfaction to the commercial classes generally, as well as to the great bulk of the community. The repeal of those laws was considered the legitimate and necessary consequence of an amended tariff and a free trade in corn. It was not, however, to be expected, that the protectionist party would willingly surrender the point; and considerable agitation prevailed for a time among ship-owners and among sailors, who were taught to believe, that the maritime greatness of England depended upon the existing system. This agitation manifested itself for the most part in the convening of public meetings, and the presentation of memorials; the crowning demonstration, however, (February 9th,) was a procession of (as was stated) 20,000 sailors, with the masters and mates of all the vessels then in the port of London, to Buckingham Palace, bearing a memorial to her Majesty. This procession was conducted by water as far as Westminster Bridge; all the steamers and small craft on the river being put into requisition for the purpose,—bands of music, and innumerable banners, conducing to give a theatrical effect to the exhibition.

On the 25th of February, the Earl of Hardwick, on behalf of the shipping interests, moved in the House of Lords the appointment of a select committee to consider the

Navigation Laws. In so doing, his lordship proceeded to show that, since 1842, when the operation of those laws were relaxed, considerable injury had arisen to the shipping interest of the country, and contended that, upon a question of this kind, "it was essential to have the opinion of practical men." It might have been urged in reply, that long experience had shown that "practical men" were too often interested parties, who, from long habit of looking upon a subject from one point of view, were not the best informed of the true general bearings of a case. His lordship, however, contended, that "the evidence before the committee of the House of Commons was one-sided, twenty-five witnesses having been examined in favour of repeal, and only nine against it;" a fact which showed that a vast majority of what were considered competent authorities on the subject, had condemned the operation of the Navigation Laws. His lordship did not assert that any competent witnesses on the other side of the question had been unduly excluded.

Earl Grey, on the part of government, offered no opposition to the appointment of the proposed committee. The proposition was therefore agreed to; with what practical result, may be gathered from the fact, that, at the close of the session, in August, the Earl of Harrowby brought up the report of the committee on the Navigation Laws, which declared that, "owing to the absence of peers, and the late period of the session, the committee were not able to report fully on the subject referred to their consideration."

Meantime, in the House of Commons, frequent inquiries were made of her Majesty's government, as to their intentions upon the subject, and the period at which their plans would be promulgated. Many complaints of delay were made, and, at length, on the 15th of May, Mr. Labouchere, as President of the Board of Trade, moved that the



House "should resolve itself into committee upon the operation of the Navigation Laws." He submitted, at the same time, a resolution condemnatory of them, upon which to found a bill for their amendment.

In doing so, the right honourable gentleman proceeded to give a history of the Navigation Laws from the period of Richard the Second, "when, for the first time, the principle was introduced of giving a monopoly to British shipping, by insisting that certain articles enumerated should only be imported in British ships, or in ships of the country from whence they were imported. That law underwent various modifications at subsequent periods of our history, until it at length descended to us based upon a somewhat different principle—that of substituting for prohibition, the principle of protection by means of distinctive duties. In the reign of Elizabeth, our coasting-trade became a complete monopoly, and it was a remarkable fact that, while most commercial nations of that period were adopting the protective system, the Dutch, with a perfect system of free and unrestricted trade, built up a fabric of naval and commercial greatness such as the world had never before witnessed. In the time of the Commonwealth the system was begun, which was confirmed by the Navigation Law of Charles the Second, and which, with some material alterations, had continued down to the present day. As the law stood, the system was based upon that which was properly called the Navigation Law, the statute 7 and 8 Victoria, c. 88. The objects which these acts had in view were three:—to secure to this country the monopoly of the colonial trade—to secure also the monopoly of the long-voyage trade—and to secure to it the indirect or carrying trade. Mr. Labouchere contended, that, in reference to our own well-understood interests, those laws should not be suffered to continue in their present state; and that

our colonies had a right in common justice to demand—now that by our recent commercial policy they had lost the monopoly of our markets—that we should set them free from those commercial restrictions which we had enforced against them. Even under the protective system, our colonies had chafed against the Navigation Laws; and it was, therefore, not surprising that they should remonstrate still more strongly now, when they had no longer the benefit of that protection. The right honourable gentleman next contended, that most mischievous consequences had arisen to our trade and manufactures from the restrictions which had been adopted to secure the long-voyage to British ship-owners, and which prevented even British subjects from importing from the ports of other countries the produce of Asia, Africa, and America. With respect to the carrying trade, the regulations intended to secure it to this country had very rarely answered the purpose for which they were adopted, and at all events they were regulations which might be retaliated against us by many countries with very considerable effect. As the time was fast approaching when we could no longer expect to trade with foreign powers upon terms to them unequal and disadvantageous, was it not better at once, by timely concessions, to do more for the interest of British commerce, than could be done by restrictive systems, rather than embark in a war of retaliation with the whole world for our opponents? Mr. Labouchere then proceeded to state the alterations in the contemplation of the government, premising that they did not intend to make any material alteration in that portion of the Navigation Law which related to the coasting-trade; nor was it in contemplation to deprive her Majesty of the power which she possessed of imposing countervailing duties on any foreign nation which might treat the ship-owners of this country with injustice. Neither was it intended to

make any change in that portion of the law which related to the British fisheries, but in all other parts of the system very extensive alterations were about to be proposed. In fact, with the exceptions he had stated, it was intended to throw open to competition the whole navigation of this country. It was felt that, in exposing the British ship-owner to such competition, it was but just that every facility should be afforded to him of obtaining his ships in the cheapest market. It was, therefore, proposed to do away with the provisions of the law which limited the right of acquiring a British register to a British-built ship. In the regulations regarding ownership, it was not intended to make any material alterations, nor was any change contemplated in the manning of the commercial marine, so that in the coasting-trade it would still remain necessary that the whole crew of a ship should be British seamen, and in the foreign trade three-fourths of them. It was also proposed to admit Indian sailors, such as the Lascars, to the character of British seamen—a measure of justice which should have long since been adopted. It was also proposed to abrogate altogether the apprenticeship system, and leave ship-owners to man their ships as they pleased. The effect of that system was to supersede able-bodied seamen in our ships by the introduction of boys, leaving the former to seek employment in the American service.”

It is not necessary to refer at any length to the protracted discussions which ensued. It may be sufficient to state, that, on the 29th of May, Mr. Herries moved an amendment, to the effect, “that it was essential to the interests of this country to maintain the fundamental principles of the existing Navigation Laws; subject to such modification as might be best calculated to obviate any proved inconvenience to the commerce of the United King-

dom and its dependencies, without danger to our maritime strength." This amendment amounted, if it were held to mean anything, to a direct negative to the government motion. The debate was adjourned from day to day till the 9th of June, when Sir Robert Peel rose, at a late hour—two o'clock in the morning—immediately following Mr. D'Israeli. The right honourable baronet addressed a wearied and impatient House in a brief speech; which, late as the hour was, produced considerable effect, and was frequently interrupted by loud cheering. He said:—

"That if he could acquiesce in the opinion of the noble lord, and those who agreed with him, that the experience of the last two years had been sufficient to demonstrate the impolicy of those principles on which, in the years 1842 and 1846, the commercial tariff of this country was revised and regulated, he should not be surprised at their conclusion, not to apply those principles to our commercial marine; but, notwithstanding the experience of the last two years, his opinion remained unshaken, as to the principles by which our commercial intercourse with other nations should be regulated. If they would reject from consideration the peculiar combination of circumstances which had prevented a fair trial of the principles established in the years he referred to—if they would entirely omit from their consideration, that, in addition to any other causes of commercial derangement, all operating simultaneously not only in our own country, but in every other country in Europe with which we had commercial dealings, they had been visited by famine—if they would omit from their consideration that that surplus capital which was heretofore applicable to the procuring of luxuries or conveniences, was now necessarily applied in averting the sufferings which famine engendered—if they would reject all these considerations, it was easy to draw that conclusion. But it was



incumbent on them in that case to show in what respect there was a connection in the present sufferings of this country, which he admitted and deplored, and the principles on which, in the tariffs of 1842 and 1846, they had proceeded. It was not because we had admitted the raw material for our manufactures without duty." Being interrupted at this portion of his speech by cries of disapproval, he turned to the dissentients, and continued: "His opinion might be erroneous, but surely those who thought so showed no confidence in the strength of theirs, if they had no better answer to give than boisterous clamour. The principles on which they had acted in 1842 and 1846, in the first place, removed restrictions from commerce, and, by diminishing the duty on the raw material, enabled our manufacturers to enter into competition with their foreign rivals with great comparative advantage; they simplified the commercial code as to the entry of all articles of food and manufacture. No one could say that the tariffs of 1842 and 1846 injuriously affected the country in these respects. It might be answered,—so far they were wise, but they were wrong in admitting foreign manufactures in competition with our own in this country. That was the ground of objection. Every article of foreign manufacture, introduced under those tariffs, it was said, had thrown out of employment thousands of our own countrymen, who would else be engaged in manufactures of the same kind. Why, what a doctrine was that, for this great manufacturing nation! A country exporting £58,000,000 a year in declared value of its own manufactures, and which, by the export of those manufactures, was interfering with the employment of every country in the world! If all other countries were to adopt that view, they would look upon us, instead of being the benefactors of mankind, as being the greatest impediment to human happiness. We imported perhaps to the

extent of £1,000,000 a year of silk gloves, and woollen and cotton manufactures; and were the countries which sent those articles here, to be denounced because they threw out of employment a certain number of our artisans, who might else be employed? But in estimating the quantity of foreign goods admitted under the tariffs of 1842 and 1846, they must not forget the quantities which previously came in in an illegitimate manner. The increase in the imports of those articles was only apparent. We exported £1,500,000 of brass and copper manufactures, £1,000,000 of earthenware, £17,000,000 of cotton goods, £6,000,000 of cotton yarn, besides large quantities of woollen, linen, silk, and other manufactures—interfering with the industry of other countries in every direction; and yet we were now to condemn other countries because they asked to be allowed to supply us, in some subordinate and inferior degree, with some of those few articles which they could produce cheaper than ourselves. It was impossible to assign the distress, under which some of our operatives were undoubtedly labouring, to these imports. Let them look to the progressive increase in our exports under free-trade, and let them not suppose we were ruined because, from a combination of extraordinary circumstances, distress existed in this country. Taking the first five years, from 1827, our average exports were £37,000,000; during the next five years they were £43,000,000; in the following five years they were £49,000,000; in the last five years they had increased to £55,000,000; and in the last year, 1847, a year of severe depression, they were £58,971,000. And yet it was said that the principles of free-trade had failed, that we did nothing but import, and that we had to purchase our imports with gold. The experience of the last two years had served to convince him that it was in a diminished price of food, and the guaranty for its continuance,

that we must rest our hopes of increasing prosperity. The government now proposed that the House should listen to a proposal for considering the Navigation Laws with a view to extensive and important improvement. He thought they had arrived at a period when it was desirable to consider this motion seriously. When he looked to the position of our colonies—to the state of many European countries, which claimed from us the same advantages in navigation as we insisted on from them—to our reciprocity treaties, and to the multitude of conflicting claims arising out of them—and to the mutilated and shattered state of the Navigation Law as it existed, he found many reasons for taking that law into consideration. The speech of the honourable member for Buckinghamshire (Mr. D'Israeli) had scarcely touched the question. If he could have shown that the relaxation of the Navigation Laws would diminish our means of national defence, and endanger the national security, he thought, differing in this respect from the honourable member for the West Riding, that a powerful, perhaps a fatal objection, might be urged against sacrificing the national security to any interest. But it was necessary for those who maintained that view, to show that these laws did conduce to that end. The amendment called upon them to maintain the fundamental principles of the Navigation Laws. Now, what were those principles? The Navigation Laws were established, to destroy the maritime power of the Dutch; but what was their effect? To give the Dutch a direct advantage over us in the intercourse with the United States. Therefore they gave these formidable competitors the whole trade of the United States. Now, the principles of the Navigation Laws, as laid down by Adam Smith, applied to the coasting-trade, the fisheries, the carrying-trade, and colonial intercourse. The coasting-trade and fisheries were to be preserved by government.

At present, the carrying-trade was reserved for British vessels, or for foreign vessels carrying the produce of their respective countries. The right honourable gentleman (Mr. Herries) said that he had conferred with Mr. Huskisson; and that he was ready to carry reciprocity further than it was carried now. Why, there was no greater breach of the fundamental principles of the Navigation Laws than that very system of reciprocity; and how could the right honourable gentleman ask them to preserve the fundamental principles of the Navigation Laws, when he himself admitted that he had laboured day and night with Mr. Huskisson, and was even now prepared still further to undermine the very principles he was so anxious to uphold? He observed the right honourable gentleman shake his head; but he would convince him at once by the arguments of those on whom he himself relied, that reciprocity treaties were breaches of the fundamental principles of the Navigation Laws. Mr. Young was asked before the committee, if he thought the British ship-owners sufficiently protected? He replied, 'No; his protection was invaded by the reciprocity treaties.' Mr. Richmond, another very able witness, said, that 'he could not consider that the Navigation Laws afforded the ship-owners much protection. They were completely mutilated by the reciprocity treaties. Every treaty took something away. He could not have conceived that those treaties left so little of the Navigation Laws as he found remaining. In fact, those laws were virtually repealed.' And yet, in the face of this, the right honourable gentleman came down there, and exhibited his 'fundamental principles,' and asked them to pass an instruction to the committee that those principles should be observed. Well, then, as to the colonial intercourse. When Adam Smith wrote on that point, about 1775, he did not foresee the separation of America, and the circumstances which had since occurred. From



that period, scarcely a year had passed without an infringement of their 'fundamental principles.' And he must here observe, that on the occasion of every such infringement there was precisely the same sort of outcry of 'ruin to the ship-owner.' In 1782, when they wished to admit Ireland to participation in the colonial trade, the ship-owners loudly complained; and those of Liverpool, in a petition which they addressed to that House, declared that, 'if any such thing were permitted, Liverpool must inevitably be reduced to its original insignificance.' So it was in 1825, when the House, not acting on theories, but driven by the necessity of the case—for the question was reciprocity or retaliation—adopted the principle of reciprocity treaties. So it was on every other occasion when relaxations were adopted. In 1833, the Ship-owners' Society absolutely declared that 'the declining quality and extent of British tonnage, the embarrassment, decay, and ruin of the British ship-owner, was now an incontrovertible position.' Be it so: that was proof that they ran no risk in modifying these laws. But the fact was, the Ship-owners' Society was wrong. In 1833, when 'the decay and ruin of the British ship-owner was an incontrovertible position,' the British tonnage on the register was 2,634,000 tons, whilst in 1846, under the application of free-trade principles, it was 3,817,000 tons. What, too, did Mr. Richmond say? 'I am sure,' he said, 'that I do not exaggerate when I declare, that half the capital embarked in shipping during the last twenty-five years has been lost, and that the other half is, to a very great extent, totally unproductive of profit.' He was certain Mr. Richmond would not say a word he did not believe. He took his statement as a great authority; and if that was the account of what protection had done for the ship-owner, surely there was nothing in the statement to show that it would not be for his benefit that there should be a change.

Could that change be made for the benefit of the merchant, the capitalist, and the manufacturer, without injury to the ship-owner, or to the naval superiority of the country? If it could not, he dropped the whole question; but he thought it capable of proof that it could. In 1836, the tonnage of this country was 2,792,000; in 1842, 3,619,000; in 1847, when free-trade ought to have been fatal, it was 3,952,000. Our seamen numbered, in 1814, 117,000; in 1827, 151,000; in 1842, 214,000; in 1847, 232,000. It was in the extent of our commercial marine, and the number of our seamen, that our main reliance was placed in war. As to impressment, that system applied equally whether the Navigation Laws were maintained or not. But had not the time arrived when it was incumbent on them to consider whether it would be possible ever again to put that system into operation? Let them consider the changes which had taken place in our naval as well as in our commercial marine. After a long peace, it might be expected that the men serving in our commercial marine would be much less qualified to perform the duties of a man-of-war, than the men who served in merchant-vessels only during the short intervals of peace. Then consider the progress steam-navigation had made—how little reliance could be placed on their being able to work steam-vessels by men taken by chance from our merchant-ships. The value of impressment, therefore, was much reduced; but, in either case, as he said before, the value of that system would depend upon the strength of our commercial marine. Now, what would be the effect of a change upon that branch? What did we fear? The member for Buckinghamshire said of the Baltic ports, that they were closed by the ice during four months of every year. Compare our highly-favoured position with that of those countries? Take France. France had a strict Navigation Law. Had it improved her commercial marine? Did it

not, on the contrary, suggest a doubt whether naval superiority did not depend on the habits, pursuits, inclinations, and associations of a people, rather than on any code of laws whatever? Then, as to the United States. Now there was examined before the committee upon this subject a Captain Briggs, 'hailing,' as they call it, from Baltimore, but who was employed as the master of a liner between the United States and this country. Captain Briggs was as good a witness as he ever saw. He was examined as to any circumstances which could entitle our shipowners to any protection as against the shipowners of the United States. He was asked what were the wages of the shipwrights in the United States. He answered 10s. a day. Our wages were only 6s. a day. If they relied, therefore, on the argument that the Norwegian vessels could be built at a much less price than our own, on account of the lower wages of the shipwrights, they had at least no cause to fear the United States. Captain Briggs was then examined as to wages. He was asked how much he paid American seamen? He replied 64s. a month. He was asked if he always employed American seamen. He replied no; that he came to Liverpool and engaged British seamen, to whom he paid 50s. a month. Well, then, there was at once a difference between English and American vessels, to the extent of 14s. in favour of our own country. Then as to ship-building: let them see whether there was a chance of our being able to compete with the United States. The evidence of Captain Briggs was to the effect, that, for ship-building purposes, the Americans obtained canvass and copper from England and cordage from Russia, but paid 10 per cent. more for it than the English. Shipwrights' wages and those of seamen were higher, and timber was nearly on an equality. Under all these circumstances, what fear was there of competition with America? Captain Briggs also stated as his opinion, that we

could build a twelve-years' ship as cheaply in England as they could a ten-years' ship in America. But the Americans had some advantages. They had advantages in the greater intelligence and activity of the masters, and in the temperance and morality of their seamen,—but in none of these points had we any right to claim protective laws. Take, then, the case of our colonies. If freight could be had cheaper at New York than at Montreal, how much longer could we resist the claim of Canada for the removal of the present restrictions? On the grounds he had stated, he had come to the conclusion that the time had arrived for the reconsideration of the Navigation Laws with a view to their extensive alteration. With respect to the policy of excepting our coasting trade, and also that of obliging our ship-owners to have their vessels three-fourths manned with British subjects, he should reserve himself for a future occasion. On the question of reciprocity treaties, he thought it was deserving of consideration, whether they were not in themselves often causes of great embarrassment. They appeared perfectly fair and easily managed in theory, but when they came to be reduced to practice, they often gave rise to questions of very great difficulty. In his opinion, the great advantage lay in independent legislation on these matters. He feared that the power proposed to be given to the crown of re-establishing restrictions after a trade had once been opened, would be most difficult in operation. It looked very like inverting the usual order of the constitution. The House of Commons would relax, while the crown would restrain; and he feared that that was a position which the crown would find difficult and unpleasant. He thought it would be much better to give a temporary force to the act. Suppose it were sent back to the House of Commons at the end of five years, would not that be better than a continual multiplication of treaties? He should advise those gentle-



men who were anxious to exclude all improvement, to consider the great truth, that the prosperity of a commercial marine depended, not on a navigation law, but on the prosperity of our manufactures. Whatever tended to promote the prosperity of commerce and manufactures, could not fail to be beneficial to the shipping interest. Great reliance had been placed on the authority of Mr. Huskisson, but instead of relying on any particular dictum of Mr. Huskisson, they should look to the great principles he had laid down, and which were of universal application." Having quoted at some length Mr. Huskisson's opinion as to the advantages of gradually removing all restrictions from our colonies, and citing the advantages which relaxation had conferred upon India, the right honourable baronet concluded by saying that "our duty to our colonies was, to bring them as much as possible into contact with the nations of Europe, and to abandon that principle which had heretofore regulated the conduct of all countries with respect to their colonies—that of making their interests subservient to those of the mother-country."

The original motion was carried by a majority of 117; the numbers being 294 in favour of, and 177 against it.

The further progress of the government scheme, however, was obstructed on a subsequent evening by repeated motions for adjournments; and eventually, the bill having been brought in, and read a first time, (August 10,) was withdrawn, with a view to its being re-introduced in the following year.

Early in the session, the distressed state of the West Indian interests was brought before the House of Lords by Lord Stanley, and before the House of Commons by Lord George Bentinck; the former presenting a petition from the planters in Trclawney, in Jamaica, praying that the case of the West Indian colonies might be taken into consideration, with a view to relief; and the latter moving for the

appointment of a committee upon the subject, in which was to be included the condition of our East Indian possessions, and the Mauritius, as far as concerned the growing of sugar and coffee. Lord George Bentinck made an elaborate speech upon the occasion; a few passages of which deserve to be remembered in connection with the general progress of this question. He stated, that, "considering the reception which his motion (submitted to the House in 1846) for protection to those interests, met with, he saw no hope of obtaining the sanction of parliament to a more resolute and substantial measure of relief. Since that time, forty-eight great commercial firms connected with the sugar trade had fallen, with liabilities amounting in the aggregate to upwards of £6,300,000, whose fall might have been prevented had his motion succeeded. The same feeling did now exist in this country against slavery, as prevailed when the abolition of slavery in our colonies was effected. The cry for cheap sugar had silenced that cry against the traffic or the system which was at one time deemed so infamous. The case of the East and West India planters was desperate, and required a large remedy. They asked for differential duties, for the admission of their molasses free into the breweries and distilleries of Great Britain, for the introduction of their rum into the mother country on an equality with British spirits, for the repeal of the Navigation Laws, and for free access to the coast of Africa, that they might procure labour on the most favourable terms in their power. As to the Navigation Laws, he would at once state that he could not go along with the planters in demanding their repeal. He was utterly at a loss to conceive what benefit the West Indians could anticipate from such a measure. As to the admission of West India rum on an equality with British spirits, he still adhered to the opinion which he formerly expressed, that if equality in name was equality in equity and justice, he

would grant it to them ; but he was disposed to think that the distillers of this country might make out a case which would show that so long as they were fettered with existing restrictions, a differential scale of duties was real equality between them and the West Indians. And as to the introduction of molasses free into breweries and distilleries, he regarded that as a question between them and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, he himself seeing but little benefit to be derived from such a concession. As to the great question of emigration, in regard to the West India colonies, he much doubted whether free labour could compete under any circumstances with that of slaves, or whether any amount of free labour introduced into the West Indies would so beat down wages as to enable the planter to compete with his slave-holding rivals in Cuba and Brazil. Barbadoes was three times as densely populated as Ireland, and yet it was not able to compete with these countries." His lordship then entered into calculations, to show that, from first to last, the abolition of slavery had cost the country above £115,000,000 ; and said that, at the very moment when foreign states were contemplating the abolition of slavery, in order to obtain admission into our markets for their produce, as the result of free labour, " we at once removed all inducement to them to do so—abolished our restrictions, and thus gave a new stimulus to slavery, while ruining our own colonial planters. So far from admitting that the planters had received full compensation for their slaves, and that the bargain was closed in 1833, the fact was, that they were losers to the extent of £42,000,000 by the arrangement which they felt themselves compelled to submit to. It was no part of the bargain in 1833 that the apprenticeship should be put an end to, two years before its time. Sir E. F. Buxton, in his evidence before the House of Lords, had said, that if the people of England paid £20,000,000

towards the abolition of slavery as a matter of conscience, he could never believe they would consent to the admission of slave-grown sugar for consumption in this country. Sir Edward he said, was, unfortunately, mistaken. The real way, ever, to put a stop to the slave-trade was not that now pursued. It was not by endeavouring to blockade 2,500 miles of the coast of Africa, that they could hope to succeed—they should destroy the hornets'-nest of slave-traders in Cuba. They should at once take possession of Cuba, as an act of justice to the bondholders in this country, who had a claim of no less than £45,000,000 to justify such a course. If any honourable gentleman," pursued his lordship, "should propose a more decided proposition than his own, he would not consider himself precluded from supporting it, if it contemplated giving immediate relief to the planters; but considering the success of any such proposition hopeless in the present House of Commons, he would content himself with moving for a committee of inquiry."

The Chancellor of the Exchequer did not oppose the motion for a committee, considering that upon some points inquiry would be requisite; though he added, that in acceding to the motion, he did not imply the slightest doubt as to the policy of the course adopted towards the West Indies in 1846. After referring to the intended repeal of the Navigation Laws, which would operate as a relief to the West India interests, he stated, that it was also the intention of government to propose an advance to the planters, to defray the cost of introducing free labourers from the coast of Africa; and, moreover, to send slaves captured by our cruisers to the West Indies. These and some other measures of temporary assistance, the government were proposed to adopt, and which, accompanied by scientific improvements in cultivating their estates, would, he thought, enable the colonists to compete successfully with slave labour.



After two nights' discussion, the committee was appointed, and the grants of pecuniary relief proposed by government were agreed to at different periods of the session.

The question which most materially affected the West India interests, that of the sugar duties, was brought before the House by the premier on the 16th of June. On that occasion his lordship said, that "in considering the present state of the West Indies, and other parts of the British dominions in which sugar was produced, it would be necessary to go at some length into the legislation which had taken place on this subject during the last few years. His view was, that the distress which had existed of late years was such as had frequently occurred during the period of monopoly, and had comparatively little reference to the legislation that had taken place of late in respect to the colonies. Much of the distress had been attributed to the great act of Negro Emancipation; but he saw nothing to regret, and nothing to retract, with regard to the part which he had taken in bringing that measure about. It was not to be expected that so important an alteration could be effected without inflicting some amount of injury upon vested interests; and he believed that all parties were willing to bear testimony to the peaceable conduct of the negroes during the progress of that measure. It was originally apprehended that the introduction of free labourers from Africa, would be likely to revive slavery in a modified form, and it was necessary that the strongest measures should be adopted to prevent abuses; and up to the present period, the numbers who had availed themselves of the advantages held out by the planters to free labourers from Africa, had not been productive of any considerable advantage." The noble lord having referred to the reduction and alterations which had taken place in the duties on West India produce up to 1846, observed, "that the last alterations by which an equalization of duties had

taken place, had been required by principles of justice and humanity. He believed the main purpose of the recent alterations had been as entirely successful as that of the chain of amelioration connected with the act of emancipation of 1834. The object of the act of 1846 had been to obtain a larger supply of sugar, without imposing any additional burden on the consumer in this country. That object had been entirely successful. It appeared that the consumption of sugar in 1845 was 244,000 tons; in 1846 it was 261,300 tons; and in 1847 it was 290,700 tons. The duty obtained from the import of sugar in 1845 was £3,755,000; in 1846 it was £4,555,000; and in 1846 it was £4,596,000; showing that in the course of these three years there had been a large increase in the revenue, while the prices to the consumer had been reduced. As regarded the act of 1846, he must say, that it would not be for the interest of the consumer that so large a differential duty as 10s. a cwt. should be imposed for so long a period as six years. What he proposed was, that after the 5th of July then ensuing, the duty on colonial sugar should be reduced to 13s., and be further reduced annually 1s., until it reached a duty of 10s. That the duty on ordinary foreign Muscovado, should remain for the year as fixed by the act of 1846; but that a distinctive duty should be introduced with regard to what was called brown clayed sugar, which, for the current year, was 20s. per cwt. He proposed that that duty should be reduced at the rate of 1s. 6d. per annum, until in 1854 it reached 10s. The result of that new rate would be that in 1848-9, the duty on foreign brown clayed sugar would be 20s., on common Muscavado 18s. 6d., and on colonial 13s. In 1855 the duties on the whole would be equalized to 10s." The noble lord then stated, that "with regard to rum, he proposed that the differential duty should be reduced to four-pence per gallon."

The government proposition led to a protracted and warm debate, and was met with an amendment moved by Sir J. Pakington, which asserted the principle of discriminating duties. Upon the night of the division the government were again beholden to Sir Robert Peel for his aid in an emergency. The right honourable baronet gave them his support in the following speech :—

“ He should most imperfectly express his real feeling, if he came to the conclusion, or uttered a word which should imply an indifference to our vast transmarine possessions. For the difficulties of the colonies themselves, and the embarrassments of those connected with them, he felt the deepest sympathy ; and justly should he deserve the reproach of the honourable member for the University of Oxford, if he were disposed to prefer the material and pecuniary interest involved in the question, to public policy. He considered that it would be inconsistent with the spirit by which our great colonial empire had been founded, and by which it could be maintained, were we now, in the hour of its depression and distress, to enter into a cold calculation whether it was for our pecuniary interest to maintain our connexion with it. He repudiated all such considerations. He recollected that our colonies had been long connected with us, and had stood by our side during many vast European conflicts, and more particularly that which ended with the downfall of Napoleon, and the peace of 1814. He recollected, that in failure or defeat they shared our dangers and dejection—no, not dejection, for they never were dejected—they only saw in failure and defeat the motives for new exertions. But, independent of that, there were great social considerations connected with the subject. He rejected the argument that 95 per cent. of the population were negroes, and only 5 white. He thought it of the greatest importance to cherish that small white population, for we required it as a barrier against the extension of bar-

barism, and that if annihilated the cause of civilization would materially suffer. With these feelings, admitting the importance of our transmarine possessions, and entertaining the deepest sympathy for the present distress, he approached the discussion of this great question. That distress was admitted on all hands, and there existed, he believed, a sincere desire to alleviate it. With that view the government submitted a proposition, which was met by another—justifiable certainly, but yet of a novel kind—he alluded to the proposition of the honourable member for Droitwich, the effect of which was to refuse consideration to the proposition of the government, telling them in fact to take it back, that it was impossible to amend it, and that therefore they would not listen to it. Those who opposed it were not contented with the existing law, which they declared must be altered, and yet they refused to enter into the consideration of the plan proposed by government. They should recollect, in pursuing that course, that the present state of the West India colonies was one of great distress, that the colonists were impatient of a remedy, and that they were looking to that House for it.

“The resolution of the honourable member for Droitwich implied that that distress could be remedied by legislation; but of what use was that, if no remedy was suggested? What, he asked, were the more effectual remedies that the supporters of that resolution proposed? and to that question they must give an answer. That committee had thrown a light on the matter which could not have been thrown upon it had it not been presided over by a chairman, who brought to the consideration of the subject much astuteness and ability. The noble lord (Lord George Bentinck) was ready to propose a remedy; he could fulfil the expectations which would be raised by assenting to the amendment. But unless he had something to offer much more effectual than the plan of the



government, the result would only be to aggravate the distress. He would shortly review the present condition of the West India colonies, and the remedies which it seemed possible to apply. What could he offer to the West Indian body by way of relief? Could he give them back the measure of 1845, and establish the distinction between sugar the produce of slave-labour, and sugar the produce of free? He regretted that a further experiment had not been made of the measure of 1845. He was not entirely satisfied with the argument, that the opening of the market of Great Britain and Ireland to slave-grown sugar was of no advantage to the slave-holding planters; he was not satisfied that the free-labour sugar which was taken from the continent was immediately supplied by slave-grown sugar, and that, in point of fact, it was no discouragement to the latter. Because, whatever theoretical reasonings might be urged, the fact was, that encouragement had been given in Cuba and Brazil to the production of slave-grown sugar. The planters connected with those colonies did practically consider that admission to the English market was a boon. The direct and immediate admission to our market was a greater advantage than the indirect bounty which they had received by filling up the vacuum on the continent caused by the withdrawal of our produce. Had he then directed the councils of her Majesty, he should certainly have advised a longer trial of the measure of 1845. But in 1846 a change took place, and he had assented to the measure proposed by the noble lord opposite, in pursuance of declarations made by him, and by those acting with him, not only on grounds of public policy, but of public faith. That change precluded the maintenance of the distinction between slave and free-labour sugar, so far at least as the produce of Cuba was concerned.

“Whatever might have been his desire to maintain the

act of 1845, had he had the means, he could not shrink from the responsibility of the vote he gave in concurrence with the proposal of government. He did not give that vote merely to prevent the disturbance which might have taken place, had there been another change of government in July, 1846. The very fact that there had been a change of government, the very fact that alterations had been made between 1845 and 1846 in our commercial policy, by a further application of the principles of free trade, would have made the struggle to exclude slave-grown sugar a very protracted and doubtful one. The noble lord's government might have failed; but what would have been the result? Could any government, then to be constituted, have given an assurance to the British possessions that slave-labour sugar would be permanently excluded? They could only have passed an annual sugar bill; and every year there would have been a renewal of the struggle—the colonists on the one hand dreading the result, the inhabitants of Cuba and Brazil, on the other, hoping for an alteration. The plan of the government at least offered a permanent sugar bill, and the avoidance of an annual contest. An annual conflict on the sugar duties, with doubtful success, though it might have defeated the bill of 1846, would have prevented the application of capital in the colonies, would have prevented the settlement of the question, and would have destroyed commercial confidence. This consideration, as well as his unwillingness to disturb the government, had induced him to assent to attempt this mode of settlement. Could he now revoke that, and re-establish the distinction between free and slave labour? The honourable member for the University of Oxford thought this could be done; but he was one of very few who held that opinion. The crown had acted on the measure of the noble lord, and had admitted the produce of Cuba on the same footing as that of Venezuela and our colonies. This compelled

him to exclude from the West Indians the hope that the distinction established by the act of 1845 would be revived. He had looked through all the suggestions of the West Indians themselves ; he had attempted also to consider every measure, which, not being suggested by them, appeared likely to give them relief. One was, the reduction of colonial expenditure.

“ The evidence before the committee had left an impression on his mind, that the colonial expenditure admitted of great reduction—that the establishments in many of the colonies were founded upon imperial conceptions of government, on the idea that as certain institutions were necessary under a monarchy, there must be some sort of servile imitation of them in a colony ; and, looking at the enormous expenditures of Ceylon, of Mauritius, and of Jamaica, he was prepared to hold out to the colonists this prospect of relief ; that there should be, as there ought to be, the most determined attempt to reduce their expenditure within the narrowest limits compatible with the welfare of the colonies themselves. In these times of their distress, there was no justification for keeping up any other expenditure than that which was necessary for their benefit ; but, wishing to see the alliance maintained, and to recognize them as subjects of the Queen, entitled to the same sympathy and consideration as the inhabitants of this country, he would not retrench any of those expenses, by whomsoever borne, which were necessary for their welfare and their defence. It was also most important, not only for the purposes of that defence, but for the purposes of an enlightened internal policy, that the very best men that could be found, should be placed in the administration of colonial affairs. It would be a miserable economy, for the sake of saving some £2,000 a year, to deprive the country of the services of such men, in the administration of our colonial and external empire,

as Lord Darnley, Lord Harris, and Lord Elgin. Any niggardly award of provision to men of such eminence would be most injurious to the colonies themselves. He thought it might be better for the government of this country to take upon itself the payment of a salary which was perhaps greater than the colonists themselves considered necessary, and which was fixed more with regard to imperial considerations than to those of the mere colony. On other grounds it was highly desirable that the governor should be independent of the colonists—that he might be able to favour them without the imputation of seeking a reward for his liberality, and to do justice, and perhaps even offend them, without incurring the risk of having his salary reduced. This would be secured by the country taking upon itself the payment of the salaries of the governors. But with respect to secretaries with £4,000 a year, he would go the extreme length of making a reduction in such salaries, consistent with a proper regard for the circumstances of the colonists. He did not blame that government, more than any other, that this subject had not received an earlier consideration; but if the salaries were so reduced as to make the offices below that of governor objects of ambition to the colonists, rather than to the natives of this country, the colonists would be much more likely to be satisfied. He did not mean to exclude from those offices, persons not immediately connected with the colonies, and having local prepossessions; but the salaries attached to some of those offices were certainly capable of reduction; and whatever reduction could be made, consistent with the defence and support of the local interests of the colonies themselves, ought to be made. Any benefit which could be afforded by such retrenchment was due to them. He should be greatly surprised if the government did not readily admit this principle; he did not



understand that that source of relief was excluded from their plan.

“ With respect to the police laws for preventing vagrancy and disorder, all would agree, that whatever could be done consistent with justice and real freedom ought to be effected, and at the same time that abuse of that freedom ought to be prevented. To say how it could be done, was exceedingly difficult for those who had not local information; but he apprehended they were ready to concur with the colonists in administering whatever relief could be given under that head. Looking at the grievances alleged by the colonists, and their demands for relief, he found by a petition presented from the planters, merchants, and others of the district of Hanover, in Jamaica, so recently as September, 1847, that they demanded the removal of the protection which their fellow-subjects in Great Britain retained. First, they said the British distiller, in addition to the advantage he enjoyed over the West Indians, owing to their distance from the market, enjoyed a protection against their rum, of 9d. a gallon. Amongst the measures contemplated by government, was the reduction of that differential duty from 9d. to 4d. a gallon; and he could hold out to the colonists no hope of a greater reduction. He apprehended the government would have some serious difficulties to encounter, in carrying that reduction; but there appeared every disposition on their part to give the full measure of relief. The next ground on which the colonists alleged that their fellow-subjects retained a protection which was denied to them, was this:— ‘ The British shipowner is protected by the Navigation Laws; and this compels your memorialists to pay a freight nearly double the amount which they would have to pay, if they were permitted to ship in other vessels. A large amount of American shipping annually left the island of Jamaica in ballast;

and, but for the protection afforded to the British shipowner, your memorialists would obtain their staves, provisions, and other American commodities, at a cheaper freight, as well as transmit their sugar and rum.' That appeared to him a very reasonable complaint; but it was rather irritating, when the complaint was admitted to be just, and a remedy was attempted to be applied, to be told immediately, 'The removal of the Navigation Laws will be of no benefit whatever to us; the producers in Cuba and Brazil, will derive a greater advantage than we shall, from the repeal of the Navigation Laws.' That discouraged him from entertaining any too sanguine anticipations as to the relief to be afforded. The inhabitants of Hanover declared, so lately as September last, that their freights were nearly doubled; they were taken at their word, and offered a remedy; and now they said, 'Our complaints were ill-founded, and the remedy you propose, while encountering great opposition, will, in point of fact, be of no avail whatever to us.'

"It was difficult to take any general view of the position of the West India colonies, and of the remedies which ought to be applied for their relief, because one great element remained in uncertainty, the future employment of the squadron on the African coast. A committee was now sitting on that subject; they had taken important evidence; and he wished this question had only come on for discussion after hearing the opinion of that committee, and the intentions of the government as to that squadron. Supposing it were found *bonâ fide* ineffectual for its purpose, we should still be compelled to maintain a certain force, on account of our engagements with America and France; but if we convinced those two powers that we did not seek to be relieved from it on account of the amount which it cost, but because it was of no avail in suppressing slavery, no doubt they would be influenced by the same motives, and would con-

sider of some more effectual means of suppression. On that he gave no opinion; he was much inclined to doubt whether the sudden withdrawal of that squadron might not increase the evils of the slave-trade. But, supposing that any material saving could be effected by its withdrawal, he greatly doubted whether this country would not consent to forego the pecuniary advantage, and apply at least a considerable portion of the saving to other means more effectual for the purpose. But any view of the state of the West Indies must be imperfect and uncertain, while uncertainty prevailed as to what would be done with respect to that squadron. There were only two other suggestions of any considerable importance. One was, that there should be a great increase of immigration, and of the supply of labour; the other, that direct assistance should be given by means of protective duties. As to immigration, the government admitted the principle, that this country should provide the means immediately, by way of loan, for increasing the supply of labour; and it was proposed that £500,000 should be advanced for that purpose. He did not attach the importance which some gentlemen attached to this increased supply of labour; he could not go so far as the honourable under-secretary for the colonies, and say that if he had £500,000 to invest, he did not know how he could apply it better. The honourable member for Somersetshire (Mr. Miles) had stated that the population of the West Indies was about 1,000,000, and that they only produced 140,000 hogsheads of sugar per annum,—a conclusive proof that there was labour enough in the colonies; the only question was, how to make that labour available. It was said the negroes might be stimulated by the importation of fresh labourers, which would stir them up to emulation, and operate as a moral check on their idleness, and make them willing to work, themselves. But the utmost care would be required in applying that check, and the importa-

tion of some tens of thousands of negroes from the west of Africa would be but a clumsy expedient. Suppose it effectual, what would be the result? There would be a great addition to the number of labourers, with an insufficiency of employment; and the thousands of unfortunate persons who were separated from their connexions, and conveyed across the ocean, would probably not be employed. If immigration were encouraged at all, it only ought to be as the speculation of individuals. Government ought to take every precaution against abuse; to determine from what parts of the African coast negroes could properly be brought, selecting those places which were inhabited by free negroes, capable of forming a judgment on this subject, and of understanding the nature of a contract; to take upon themselves the responsibility of entering into communication with the sovereigns or chiefs of certain tribes, explaining to them the object of immigration to the West Indies, and undertaking the protection of the negroes. But if the government undertook that which individual speculation only could supply, the whole would end in smoke. He should be disposed to trust to the enterprise of those individuals whose estates needed an increase of negroes, the government taking every precaution against abuse on the coast of Africa, and subsequent abuse in the West Indies. But whatever was done, he hoped this country would not be justly subjected to the imputation of having, on any pretence, organized a new species of slavery. Though half a million were to be granted by the government, he hoped they would not insist on necessarily applying that half million to purposes of immigration; but should they be satisfied that there were some other modes by which temporary relief might be given to the West Indies more effectual than this of immigration, they would willingly consent to extend the grant to such other purposes.



“If her Majesty’s government admitted the principle of temporary parliamentary relief, he did hope they would consider what was the most effectual mode of employing it. He knew that in some cases the advantages of extensive irrigation were not sufficiently appreciated. A peer of parliament, one of the greatest proprietors in Jamaica, Lord Howard de Walden, stated that the expense of reclaiming lands in that colony was repaid in a year or two. Then, he asked, why did they not do it? The answer was, that they were too impoverished. But why did they not do it in their days of prosperity? The only reply to that must be, that they had relied too greatly on the aid and encouragement of the principle of protection. Here was a drain that would benefit three estates, the cost of which would be only £4,000, and which would pay at the rate of 50 per cent. Why, in this country we were making drains, only expecting them to pay 4 or 5 per cent. The honourable member for Rochester told them the other night of an estate in Porto Rico. Why, there was an estate in that island to which irrigation was applied, and the production of which was raised from 80 or 90 hhds. to 100 the first year; to 200 the second; then to 300, to 500, and at last, in 1847, to 900 hhds! Why, if that could be done—if such enormous produce could be obtained at such a small expense—if, in fact, by merely following the system of Lombardy, where all cultivation was dependent upon the prevention of droughts, they could produce such results as these—surely they might expect, as the natural consequence of forcing the planters to make exertions, that they would be able to find some remedy for existing evils. Lord Howard de Walden spoke of a tramway eight miles long, costing £15,000, which would benefit sixteen estates. Why, he said, let government be willing to aid the West India body in making such improvements as these. Let them apply their money, not in aiding immigration—the effect of which, for aught he

knew, might ultimately be to entail pauperism upon the colony—but in assisting these important improvements. Then as to drainage. Lord Howard de Walden gave strong evidence upon that point. He spoke of the importance, not of tile drains, but of large common open drains, which might serve the purposes of two or three estates at a time. Did not all this prove most forcibly the necessity which existed for stimulating the planters by a wholesome system of competition? They could not expect to get on without improvements; and a proper competition, they might depend upon it, was the best means of ensuring their commencement. Let such a system be tried, and he believed it would lay the foundation of great prosperity in the West Indies.

“Well, then, he came to the last and most important consideration of all—Would he give a protective duty of 10s. for the ten succeeding years? That was what the amendment in effect meant; and where he differed from his right honourable friend (Mr. Goulburn)—and he was sure, he trusted no difference would interrupt the affectionate intercourse that existed between them—where he differed from him was, in stating that it would be possible to vote for these resolutions without giving a hope that he would be prepared to establish a protective duty. If those resolutions were voted, the very least they could offer would be, in his opinion, a protective duty of 10s. for six years, and that was a measure he was certainly not prepared to assent to. He was prepared to oppose such a measure on these grounds—that it was his clear and decided conviction, that protection was not for the interest of the West India body. Now, why did he say that the resolutions proposed as an amendment meant nothing but a 10s. duty? Why, because the honourable baronet behind him was not acting for himself. He was acting as chairman of a committee upon this subject, and the only recommendation of that committee was—more

protection. The honourable baronet had changed his resolution before the subject came to be debated, but was there a single West India planter who would not say that the resolution, as it stood, meant a 10s. duty, and nothing else? He repeated, that he would not consent to give that protection. The West India body being distressed for want of labour, he was asked to give a 10s. protection to the produce of the East Indies and the Mauritius, where there was no deficiency of labour. Those possessions were to have the same benefit, although they had not the same cause of complaint. What was the consequence? It was admitted that some time must elapse before the West Indians could get the supply of labour they required. But the East Indies and the Mauritius had this advantage at once. The protection to them, therefore, would operate as a stimulus to competition with the West Indies in the way of all others most likely to injure them. Now, let them consider what object this petition was to answer. In consequence of the difficulty in securing a supply of labour, the West Indies would not enjoy the benefit of the protection for a longer period than four years at the most. Well, what would Cuba be doing during that time? Would the people of that part of the world relax in their exertions? They would be, he presumed, in earnest in taking off the duty at the expiration of six years. Well, would not Cuba say 'We have a guaranty that in six years we shall be placed in the same position as the British colonists; let us, therefore use every means in our power to extend our cultivation.' Well, now, let them see what would be the position of the West Indies during the same period. He was content to rest the facts of the case upon the evidence of his honourable friend behind him (Mr. Barkly), who had spoken earlier in the evening with that ease and facility which showed complete mastery of his subject. Now, what did his honourable friend say in his evidence before the

committee? 'In the West Indies,' he said, 'we are engaged in an endeavour to keep down wages by promoting an additional supply of labour. I think a differential duty of 10s. would decide the struggle in favour of the negro.' Well, but the last person with whom he (Sir Robert Peel) had any sympathy was the negro, who was endeavouring to raise the price of wages upon his master. 'I think,' continued the honourable member in his evidence, 'he would in that case get his own way, and probably to the entire extent of the increased price of the produce.' And then the honourable member went on to say, that probably the increased price would be about 4s. per cwt. What, then, did he (Sir R. Peel) get? He 'decided the struggle in favour of the negro,' and he raised the price of sugar 4s., without giving the slightest relief to the West Indies. Why, he should be defeating his own object in every possible way. No, it was his clear and decided belief that to benefit the West Indian, they must establish a system of competition which would give him a stimulus and a motive to exertion. Under that stimulus he did not despair to see removed, even causes of depression, for which no legislative remedy could be provided. Monopoly had done nothing for the West Indies hitherto. In 1830, a committee sat upon their case, and reported that they wished to be enabled to compete successfully in the British market, at a time when there was a 63s. duty in their favour, and when scarcely a cwt. of foreign sugar found its way to England. It was with sugar as it was with corn. In 1836 and 1838, when scarcely a single grain of foreign corn came into consumption in this country, they had committees to consider the cause of agricultural distress. The committees replied, that they could devise no legislative remedy. The fact was, that they could not exactly apportion the supply with the demand. And so it was with the sugar-grower.



“He did not at all despair of their entering into competition fairly with the foreign grower. He felt that a man must be blind, indeed, to the signs of the times, who could believe that this system of slave-labour could ultimately be maintained. Look what was the internal condition of the slave states at that moment; see what was the condition of Cuba. What said Lord Howard de Walden, who had so recently visited that island, and inspected many of the estates deemed the most prosperous? They were told much of the thriving condition of Cuba. What was the feeling there as to the security of the slave-owners, and the permanence of their prosperity? Lord Howard de Walden had been asked by the committee: ‘Are the overseers of estates in Cuba obliged to go armed?’ His answer: ‘Yes, invariably they carry cutlass and pistol, and have two or three bloodhounds at their heels, for their protection.’ ‘It is quite the custom in the island for no white man connected with any estate to go on foot any distance, and on horseback he always wears pistols in addition to the other weapons I spoke of.’ When he looked at the slave states of North America he perceived there the same fear and distrust, the result of the same cause. What was the reason why all discussions about slavery were fiercely and peremptorily put down there? that abolition was tarred and feathered? Simply this, that the slaveholders writhed under a sense of the utter insecurity of their position. What had been the case with our West India colonies? He had regretted to hear the honourable gentleman taunt the West India colonists with the complaints they had so repeatedly made, but certain it was, as a matter of fact, that these colonists had been incessantly complaining for the last 130 years under slavery under apprenticeship, under emancipation; and why? Because there had been a withering blight on the land that had so long fostered slavery; because the unholy fetters in which

its proprietors had enchained their fellow-men, had galled themselves, and made them feel undying distrust and insecurity. Let this country never feel regret at the mighty efforts it had made to put an end to slavery—at the magnificent determination it had manifested in the eyes of Europe, to emancipate the negro. The slaveholder might for awhile seem rich, prosperous, triumphant, but at no moment could a country be secure, in which the condition of slavery was permitted. He did hope that those governments which encouraged slavery would be wise in time, and appreciate, ere it was too late, the inevitable consequences of continuing that system. Did he himself think that the measure of temporary protection proposed by his honourable friend would have the effect of impeding the slave-trade, he would vote for it; but he felt that it would be of no avail for this purpose.

“He would appeal to the encouragers of slavery all over the world, whether there had not things occurred of late which would give them some sense of the insecurity of their position? There had been mighty convulsions in Europe; the events of Paris had produced events in Berlin, in Vienna, which any man who should have predicted them but a few months since, would have been regarded as insane for merely suggesting as possibilities. These events were still going on; already the mighty heavings of the convulsion were being felt on the other side of the Atlantic. Look at the state of Martinique. These things should be speaking lessons for the governments of Brazil, of Cuba, ay, and of the United States. All these would do well to take timely warning, for, in his belief, these events in Europe must precipitate the extinction of slavery and of the slave-trade all over the world. He earnestly hoped that this would be effected by the timely concession of governments themselves, for certain it was that there was among the nations a largely

increasing sympathy with the slave. He that trafficked in human blood, that dragged the negro from his native shores to Brazil and to Cuba, though he prospered for a time, might find, and this very speedily, that he was standing on a slippery place, and that his prosperity might have a sudden and fearful fall. It was his earnest hope that the system would be discontinued on the motion of the hitherto offending governments themselves, brought by reflection to the true conviction that their interests herein were identical with their duty. At all events, full sure he was that the doom of slavery was sealed, and that the slave, wherever slave existed, must, ere long, be freed. He would conclude in the glowing words of Curran :—‘ No matter in what language the doom of slavery may have been pronounced ; no matter in what disastrous conflict his liberty may have been cloven down ; no matter what complexion, incompatible with the notion of freedom, he may wear ; no matter whether Indian or African sun have burnt his brow ; the time is fast approaching when his soul shall walk abroad in all its native majesty, when his body shall swell beyond the measure of the chains bursting from around him, and he shall stand forth redeemed, regenerate, and disenthralled, by the irresistible genius of universal emancipation.’ ”

This speech was frequently interrupted by the loud cheering of the ministerial and free-trade party. No one rose to reply to it. It was felt that the subject had been exhausted. The House immediately afterwards divided (June 29th), when the proposition of the government was carried by a majority of 15 only ; 260 voting for, and 245 against it.



RIGHT HON<sup>BLE</sup> JOHN PHILPOT CURRAN.

*John Philipot Curran*





## CHAPTER XIV.

## REPORTS OF THE COMMITTEES ON THE BANK CHARTER ACT.

THE committces of the two Houses of parliament, which had been appointed to inquire into the causes of the late commercial distress, and particularly into the operation of the Bank Charter act, severally made their reports towards the close of the session. These reports were remarkable as proving the existence of a difference of opinion between the two branches of the legislature,—so far at least as they may be supposed to have been represented by their respective committees,—upon the fundamental principles of an important measure of social policy, which they had concurred in passing, little more than three years previously. The report of the Lords' committce condemned the restrictions of the Bank Charter act, whilst that of the Commons' committee supported them. It should be stated, however, that the latter report was carried by a majority of two votes only, of which one was given by Sir Robert Peel, the framer of the measure.

The first report of the Commons' committee was presented on the 8th of June. It stated, that "there was a general concurrence of opinion amongst the witnesses, that the primary cause of the distress was the deficient harvest, especially of the potato crop, of the year 1846, and the necessity of providing the means of payment, in the year 1847, for the unprecedented importations of various descriptions of food which took place in that year. Among other causes, the deficient supply of cotton, the diversion of capital from its ordinary employment in commercial transactions to the construction of railroads, the undue extension of

credit, especially in our transactions with the East, and exaggerated hopes of enlarged trade, had been stated, by some of the witnesses, as having contributed to the same result."

The committee added, "that many of the witnesses, including the governor and deputy-governor of the Bank of England, had expressed their belief that earlier steps in the autumn of 1846, and the spring of 1847, on the part of the Bank of England, might have obviated the necessity for the more stringent measures which circumstances compelled the directors to adopt in April, and might thus have prevented the alarm which was caused by those measures." They also stated, that "an opinion appeared to have been entertained by some persons, though not by the governor and deputy-governor of the Bank of England, that the Bank was released by the act of 1844 from any obligation except that of consulting the pecuniary interests of its proprietors." The committee did not share this opinion, and stated, that although there were no restrictions imposed by law upon the discretion of the Bank in respect to the conduct of the banking as distinguished from the issue department, yet that the Bank was a public institution, possessed of special and exclusive privileges, standing in a peculiar relation to the government, and exercising, from the magnitude of its resources, great influence over the general mercantile and monetary transactions of the country. These circumstances, in their estimation, imposed upon the Bank the duty of a consideration of the public interest, not indeed enacted or defined by law, but which parliament, in its various transactions with the Bank, had always recognized, and which the Bank had never disclaimed. "It was unnecessary," said the committee, "to impose such duty by law, as there could be little doubt that the permanent interests of the Bank were identified with those of the public at large. That identity of interest gave both to the public and to the pro-

prietors of Bank stock a deep interest in every measure calculated to ensure an enlightened administration of the affairs of the Bank. They learnt, therefore, with satisfaction that the attention of the court of directors had been given to this subject, and that a change had been made by them, as to the selection of the governor and deputy-governor, calculated, in the opinion of the committee, to improve the constitution of the governing body of the Bank. They felt confident that the effect of this change, and the experience which had been acquired during the events of the previous two years, would ensure to the public, in the future management of the Bank of England, greater benefits from that national establishment than it had hitherto been the means of conferring upon the country."

The committee concluded their report by stating, that evidence which had been given as to the effects of the act of 1844, had been contradictory. "Its beneficial effects, as regards the issues of the country banks, had been admitted by many of the witnesses; and although some had suggested an alteration of its provisions, very few had contested the general principles on which it was founded." Upon the point whether it were advisable that powers should be conferred by law upon the government, to enable them to meet the occurrence of any circumstances which might call for extraordinary interference; the committee came to the conclusion, that, "looking to the impossibility of foreseeing what the precise character of the circumstances might be, and also what might be the measure best calculated to meet them, it was more expedient to leave to those with whom the responsibility of the government might rest at the time, to adopt such measures as might appear to them best suited for the emergency. After a careful review of all the evidence, they were, therefore, of opinion that it was not expedient to make any alteration in the Bank act of 1844."



The Lords' report appeared a little later — about the middle of July. It was an elaborate document, including an analysis of the evidence, and a statement of the facts upon which the committee grounded their judgment. The committee, after stating the circumstances of the late commercial distress, expressed their approval of the letter of government in October, relaxing the provisions of the Bank Charter act, though they did not attribute all the advantages to that step which Mr. Jones Loyd and others had suggested. They further stated, that some of the witnesses had recommended the discontinuance of the weekly publication of the accounts of the Bank, but that in this recommendation they did not concur. The limit in the amount of silver bullion allowed to be held by the Bank, was objected to as unnecessary, and the advances by the Bank to the government on deficiency-bills during the preceding year, it was contended, had had a very prejudicial effect upon commercial transactions. The general view taken by the committee of the commercial crisis of this period may be gathered from the following extract upon this branch of the inquiry :—

“A sudden and unexampled demand for foreign corn, produced by a failure in many descriptions of agricultural produce throughout the United Kingdom, coincided with the unprecedented extent of speculation produced by increased facilities of credit and a low rate of interest, and had for some time occasioned over-trading in many branches of commerce. This was more especially felt in railroads, for which calls to a large amount were daily becoming payable, without corresponding funds to meet them, except by the withdrawal of capital from other pursuits and investments. These causes account for much of the pressure under which many of the weaker commercial firms were doomed to sink, and which was felt even by the strongest. To these causes might be added a contemporaneous rise of price in cotton ; and,

with respect to houses connected with the East and West India trade, a sudden and extensive fall in the price of sugar, by which the value of their most readily available assets underwent great depreciation. In what precise proportion these different causes contributed to the common disaster, there was some room for difference of opinion, but that each had a considerable share in producing it, no person had been found to dispute.

“Some of these causes” said the committee, “are obviously beyond the reach of legislative control. But upon those which are connected with the extension of commercial speculation, encouraged or checked by the facility, or the difficulty, of obtaining credit, by the advance of capital, and the discount of bills, the powers and position of the Bank of England must at all times enable that corporation to exercise an important influence. The committee have consequently felt it to be their duty to inquire into the course pursued by the Bank acting under the provisions of the 7 and 8 Vict. c. 32; and they have come to the conclusion, that the recent panic was materially aggravated by the operation of that statute, and by the proceedings of the Bank itself. This effect may be traced, directly, to the act of 1844, in the legislative restriction imposed on the means of accommodation, whilst a large amount of bullion was held in the coffers of the Bank, and during a time of favourable exchanges; and it may be traced to the same cause, indirectly, as a consequence of great fluctuations in the rate of discount, and of capital previously advanced at an unusually low rate of interest. This course the Bank would hardly have felt itself justified in taking, had not an impression existed, that, by the separation of the issue and the banking departments, one inflexible rule for regulating the Bank issues had been substituted by law, in place of the discretion formerly vested in the Bank. The banking depart-

ment was considered to be thus absolved from all obligation but that which was connected with the pecuniary interests of the proprietary."

The conclusion at which the committee arrived, was, that the act of 1844 was defective in principle, and injurious in practice; that the attempt which had been made by its supporters, to apply one identical rule to cases where the exchanges were adverse or favourable, was a serious error; as it was also, to deal solely with the positive amount of notes in circulation, without considering the disturbing causes which might augment or diminish the efficiency of these notes as part of the currency; and that in both these respects, the act of 1844 was defective; that in consequence of these defects, the act in question aggravated the distress of 1847, more especially in the months of September and October; and that it must have a tendency to lead to the same results hereafter, whenever similar circumstances should arise.

The committee, therefore, recommended "that the principle of the act of 1844 should be amended, by the introduction of a discretionary relaxing power; such power, in whomsoever vested, to be exercised only during the existence of a favourable foreign exchange."

The committee left the appointment of the authority which should possess this power of relaxing the restrictive principle of the act, to the legislature; but, after a careful consideration of the matter, they intimate, that in their opinion the most suitable parties to be intrusted with it, would be the directors of the Bank of England.

On the 22nd of August, Mr. Herries came forward, in a very thin House, with a motion, in which he deliberately pitted the decision of the Lords' committee, against that of the Lower House; not so much with a view of coming to any practical issue during the current session, as with that of "pledging the House to take the whole subject into its



consideration at the earliest possible period in the session ensuing."

This mode of procedure was resisted by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, as contrary to usage, and uncalled for by the circumstances of the case; he therefore moved "the previous question." Mr. Spooner took the occasion to reiterate his oft-repeated denunciations against the whole principle of the acts of 1819 and 1844; and Sir Robert Peel could not resist the temptation to indulge in a few words in defence of his monetary policy.

"With respect to the motion before them, his right honourable friend (Mr. Herries) invited them to enter into a pledge with regard to their proceedings in the next parliament; and, to be sure, though the promoters of dissatisfaction, disaffection, and disloyalty, throughout the country, might be dissatisfied with previous questions, still he did not think they would find much consolation in the original motion. The motion in question was one by which the House engaged to alter the law, but were next session to take the matter into their serious consideration. What would be gained by such a course? He addressed himself to those who differed from his views, and he asked them to consider that that House did not stand very high at that moment in respect to their practical adoption of great reforms. In short, they had shown rather a taste for discussion, than for practical activity. Subjects had been proposed in the earlier part of the session, which the government had found it quite impossible to carry, for that reason, because there was a desire to have them thoroughly examined. They had now arrived at the 22nd of August, without having made much progress in legislation; and not having fulfilled present engagements, they drew a bill six months before date, in order to be ready for next session—and under what circumstances? His right honourable friend had said that the



country was in a state of anxiety on the subject. On that understanding he (Sir Robert Peel) came up to town last Tuesday, and found that there were only 35 members present when his right honourable friend was to bring on his motion. On that (the present) night there were 42 members present, when an honourable gentleman moved that the House adjourn. Now, he asked, was it likely, if the question was held in such importance, that that would be the case? If his right honourable friend would not invite them to come to any present decision, he asked, was it worth while to invite them to come to an engagement as to what they would do next year? He thought the less parliament called the attention of the country to what they would do next session, the better. Notwithstanding his objection as to time, he would be very unwilling to incur the charge of wishing to stifle discussion on the question; and when the time for discussion should arrive, he would maintain, to the utmost of his power, the policy of keeping in force the restrictive clauses of the bill of 1844. He believed that those clauses prevented the occurrence in April last, superadded to commercial pressure, of the danger of political panic. He believed that the Bank would have persevered from April to June, as they did from January to April, in extending the amount of securities, and he believed that it was only the salutary pressure imposed by the act which prevented it. When the time for discussion should arrive, he was prepared to impeach the report, and to show that the most impolitic arrangement which could be made would be to give the Bank of England the power of repealing the restrictive clauses; and that, as it was impossible to foresee what circumstances might arise which might necessitate such a measure, it was infinitely safer for the country, and better for the monetary interest, to reserve that discretionary power in the hands of the government, to exercise it according to the cir-

circumstances, and to meet the pressure according to its nature and character, rather than to allow to devolve on the Bank the power of relaxing the restrictions only under given circumstances. What was the effect of the acts of 1844 and 1845? They contemplated many things: They prevented the issuing of more paper by the banks of Scotland and Ireland, and by the country banks of England, beyond a permitted amount, unless the issue took place in gold; and when occasion called for it, they permitted the issue of £33,000,000 of paper money by those banks, without the deposit of a single ounce of gold. Honourable gentlemen laughed at this feature of the act; but he said that the convertibility of the paper issued was ensured by its limitation. He could not say too much of the importance which attached to the principle of continued convertibility, that the note should pass on the principle of a metallic standard. All the evidence of countries with which this country came in contact, proved the advantage of the system, by showing that the nearer those countries had approached to a complete metallic currency, the less had been their commercial discredit. And looking to the general circumstances of the country, he considered that the greatest calamity which could fall upon it would be to entertain the notion, that in the time of pressure the true method of mitigating the evil was by relaxation of the resolutions in question. He assured them that pressure had its own remedy, and that such a course would only augment the evil, and involve the country in real danger, from the discredit which would be brought upon it. The main recommendation of the Lords' committee was, that there should be the power of relaxing the restrictions in the act, and that that power should be vested in the Bank of England. If power was so vested, he said it would be against all experience. The House had only passed the bill in 1844, after three years of inquiry, because it was

impressed with the conviction that the Bank had exercised discretionary powers, and had not wisely exercised them. At the same time that he urged that the power should remain in the hands of the government, he did not doubt that the Bank directors were worthy of confidence, and that Mr. Cotton and Mr. Norman, who had given their evidence, might be trusted with the utmost credit. These gentlemen distinctly declared that they advised that the act should not be relaxed—that the power of relaxation should be left with the Bank. Mr. Horsley Palmer alone dissented from that. That gentleman was of opinion that there should be a relaxing power; but that to give it to the Bank would be a violation of the law, and that it would be absurd to relax with one hand, and to restrict with the other. The Bank directors said that they were a commercial body, and that they were subject to pressure, and they therefore wished to have the authority of the law to enable them to resist that pressure. But he (Sir Robert Peel) hoped that they would continue the restrictions which these gentlemen wished to do away with, that they would not confound the issue of paper money with the capital of the country; that they would not believe it to be in the power of the Bank of England to raise or diminish the rate of interest to the extent they wished; that they would recollect that trade was carried on with capital, and not with paper money, other than as paper money was the representative of gold; that the carrying on of trade by means of credit meant only that they traded not with other people's credit, but with other people's capital; that the greatest advantage which this country could have was fixity in the value of money, and security for the convertibility of paper; that unless they had that fixity and that convertibility, all classes would suffer—not only all those concerned in commerce and manufactures, but those chiefly would suffer who depended for every day's subsistence on the

wages of their labour. They might depend upon it, that if the currency were to be reduced in value, there would, at first, be no corresponding reduction in the value of the articles to be purchased, but that the two shillings or three shillings a day of the labourer would become gradually of less value than before; and that no one class amongst the whole of this trading community had a more fixed and permanent interest in those arrangements which gave to their paper as much as possible the character of a metallic currency, than the labouring classes. When the House next approached the consideration of this subject, he hoped those principles would be borne in mind, and that they would not believe that pressure in times of panic and distress was necessarily an evil;—that pressure, a salutary pressure, an early pressure—a compelled pressure. Such a pressure, if its necessity were not induced by panic, was compelled by law; and though it might be complained of by some, it was the only remedy against increased disasters, and the only guaranty for securing the convertibility of paper money.”

After a few observations from Messrs. Muntz and Hume, the motion of Mr. Herries was negatived, and “the previous question” was carried without a division. No further attempt was made to revive the subject during the session.



## CHAPTER XV.

MISUNDERSTANDING WITH THE SPANISH GOVERNMENT—DIPLO-  
MATIC RELATIONS WITH THE COURT OF ROME—PROROGATION  
OF PARLIAMENT.

LONG prior to the eventful summer of 1848, the two governments of Great Britain and Spain had been on a very delicate footing, in consequence of a misunderstanding, which was at first merely personal. Ultimately these differences led to an open rupture, which fortunately had no other result than the cessation of diplomatic intercourse between the two courts; a result in which Great Britain was but slightly concerned, and in no way incommoded.

Many circumstances conduced to this end—many differences of opinion upon points of policy, and upon points of honourable duty; upon which the British Government, finding milder admonitions unavailing, at length spoke out rather more plainly than was agreeable to the punctilios of General Narvaez, the Spanish prime minister, and to the court of Madrid. The Spanish minister, M. de Sotomayor, returned a letter without answer, which had been handed to him by Sir Henry Bulwer, the British ambassador, in which the opinions of the British government, upon some points of domestic policy, were rather freely expressed. M. de Sotomayor afterwards followed up this step by sending Sir Henry Bulwer his passports; or, in other words, expelling him from the country. A step so bold as this, adopted by a weak country against the principal power of Europe, would have excited attention at any time. It would possibly have excited more notice than it actually did, had it been taken by a stronger government than that of Madrid, and had the cause of difference involved in any direct way the character or interests of this country.

Of the voluminous correspondence which took place on this occasion, it will be sufficient to preserve one specimen, which is characteristic of the high tone which Lord Palmerston generally assumed, in cases where he felt that he was in a position of moral advantage over the party addressed. Writing to Sir Henry Bulwer under date of the 20th of April, he said :—

“I have received your despatch of the 11th instant, with its enclosures, and I have to instruct you to state to the Duke of Sotomayor, that her Majesty’s government entirely approve the step you took in making your communication of the 7th instant, and, likewise, of your note of the 12th; that her Majesty’s government, however, are not at all offended, either by the sending back of your communication of the 7th of April, or by the angry tone and language of the Duke of Sotomayor’s note of the 10th, however they may regret the existence of those feelings in the minds of the Spanish government, of which the language of his excellency’s note and the return of yours were proofs. Her Majesty’s government, in making to the government of Spain the representations and in giving the advice which your communication conveyed, were inspired by no sentiment but that of sincere friendship for Spain, and of deep interest in the welfare of Queen Isabella. They felt that in making that communication they were performing a duty, and not taking any undue liberty; and, therefore, at all events, it is a satisfaction to her Majesty’s government to reflect that, although their counsel has been rejected and their communication has been returned, the note has, nevertheless, been read and the counsel has been tendered, and that whatever calamity may happen in Spain, her Majesty’s government stand acquitted of not having done what they could to prevent it. With regard to the contents of the Duke of Sotomayor’s note, her Majesty’s government have only

to observe, that if the right of her Britannic Majesty to the throne of the United Kingdom had been disputed by a pretender; if civil war had arisen out of such a conflict of claims; if the British government had only a few years ago sent a special envoy to Madrid to solicit the assistance of Spain, in order to place her Majesty on her throne; if that assistance had been given, both morally by treaty engagements, and physically by military and naval forces; if the aid thus afforded by Spain had contributed in so essential a degree to secure the crown to her Majesty, that it might with truth be said, that without such aid her Majesty would not now have been Queen of England; if, moreover, there still remained a pretender, who asserted his right, and whose pretensions were backed by a large party in the United Kingdom; and if upon every symptom of danger from that pretender, and that party, the British government was in the habit of reminding Spain of the treaty engagements which she had entered into; was also in the habit of asserting that those engagements were still in force, and was continually claiming the benefit of the alleged existence of those engagements; if all those things existed, and if the government of Spain had, in a moment of general disturbance in Europe, warned the British government of dangers by which, in their opinion, the security of her Majesty's throne was menaced—I think I may confidently affirm that, under such circumstances, any statesmen who might be ministers of the British crown, instead of sending back the note in which such representations were conveyed, and instead of replying to it in discourteous terms, would have accepted the communication in the same spirit of friendship in which it was made; and whether they adopted or not the advice which it contained, would at least have considered it a proof of the continued existence of that friendship on the part of Spain, to which in such case would have been owing the

circumstance that those British ministers had the honour of being advisers of the crown, instead of being proscribed exiles in a foreign land. You will transmit to the Duke of Sotomayor a copy of this despatch.—(Signed) PALMERSTON."

On the 5th of June Mr. Bankes brought forward a motion condemning the conduct of our government, and regretting what had occurred as "humiliating" to this country; but it was evident, from the tone of the debate which ensued, that the feeling of the House was very little agitated by the occurrences referred to. Lord John Russell defended the conduct of Sir Henry Bulwer, although he had communicated to the Duke de Sotomayor a dispatch not originally sent to him for that purpose. He maintained, nevertheless, that Sir Henry was perfectly justified in so doing; in the exercise of his discretion, and under the prompting of circumstances, of the force of which he was the best judge. Mr. D'Israeli made a sarcastic speech, condemning the whole course of Lord Palmerston's foreign policy; and Sir Robert Peel very briefly interposed, and in a speech, of no great point or ambition, defended the government and its ambassador from the attack levelled against them. He said, he considered it incumbent on the government "to adopt the whole responsibility of Sir Henry Bulwer's conduct, because one of the reasons assigned by the Spanish government for his dismissal was, that the public opinion of Spain was adverse to him, and because his conduct was not approved by his own government. Looking at the dispatches on the table, there was not the slightest ground for impugning his conduct, which, under the circumstances in which he was placed, was wise and discreet. With respect to Mr. Bankes's resolution, he could not concur in it." Lord Palmerston also spoke on the occasion, and declared that he, and he alone, was responsible for the approbation communicated to Sir Henry Bulwer. He approved Sir Henry's conduct, but he could not help remark-



ing that the dispatch of the 16th of March was not originally intended to be communicated "in the very terms" to the Spanish government. His lordship proceeded to explain the reasons which induced him to refrain from publishing some portions of the correspondence; and he then expressed his entire approval of the discretion evinced by Sir Henry Bulwer. "With respect to our right to give advice, Spain herself had claimed our aid, and held that we were bound, under the quadruple alliance, to give it. We were therefore fully entitled to warn the Spanish government against dangers which might render our aid necessary." The noble lord, in closing his observations, remarked, "that an ambassador in a country such as Spain—where within a few years there had been not less than thirty presidents of the council, and thirty-eight ministers of foreign affairs—had a difficult card to play, and could hardly confine his intercourse with the president and foreign minister in power for six months, to the exclusion of all the ex-ministers."

So satisfactory were these statements considered, that the resolution was negatived without a division.

These occurrences were soon forgotten amid matters of more importance, being scarcely remembered during the two years in which we were unrepresented by an ambassador at the court of Madrid. If cited at all, it was only by financial reformers, to show how very well we could manage, in such a country, without an ambassador, and how much expense might be spared to the nation by the abolition of the principal embassies.

Another matter of foreign policy brought under the attention of parliament in the session 1847-8, although it did not give rise to much discussion at the time, has not been without importance in connection with subsequent events. On the 7th of February, 1848, the Marquis of Lansdowne laid upon the table of the House of Lords, a bill to enable her Majesty

to enter into diplomatic relations with the court of Rome ; and in moving the second reading on the following Friday, he entered into some explanations of the existing state of the law, and the necessity which appeared to exist for altering it. He said :—

“ It was inferred from an expression contained in the Bill of Rights, and made use of in the Act of Succession, that her Majesty was disabled from putting herself in diplomatic connexion with Rome. In the spirit and intention of these acts he cordially concurred, and trusted that they would ever remain land-marks in the constitutional system of this country ; but he could not construe them into an absolute prohibition upon the Protestant sovereign of this country, from entering into political connexion with the court of Rome. Some doubt, however, existed as to this point ; to remove which, was the chief object of the present bill. Much uncertainty was thrown around the legality of a mission to Rome by the proceedings which had arisen out of Lord Castlemain’s mission thither, but the objection to which did not hinge upon the fact of the mission itself, but upon the object for which it was undertaken.” He then proceeded to show that it was essential that her Majesty should be invested with the power contemplated by the bill, and dilated on the advantage of obtaining that by direct means which had long been effected by circuitous and more questionable methods. “ No minister who had ever wielded the destinies of this country was more closely identified with the Protestant succession than was Sir Robert Walpole, and yet he was in frequent communication with Rome, although by the indirect means alluded to. The Protestant court of Hanover, too, was in direct diplomatic connexion with the pope, at the time of the union of the crown of Hanover with that of England.” He then adverted to several cases, since the commencement of the French revolution, in which it had

been found necessary, although through the most unsatisfactory, and in some instances perhaps the most mischievous media, to put the government of this country in diplomatic communication with the pope; all of which, he contended, went to make out a case of necessity for doing that which the bill was designed to enable her Majesty to do. He then approached the consideration of an objection which some had made, although much to his surprise—that the bill would be, for the first time, a recognition, by the government of this country, of the authority of the pope, whilst the pope had not yet recognized the sovereign of these realms. As to the first branch of this argument, if such it might be called, what became of the treaty of Vienna, to which Great Britain was a contracting party, and to which, on behalf of this country, Lord Eldon himself put the seal, by which treaty certain portions of Italy were ceded and secured to the court of Rome? If this was not a recognition of the papal authority, he knew not what would be. And as to the pope's not having recognized the sovereign of Great Britain, very recent historical events went to show that the very reverse of this was the fact, and that the recognition in question had taken place over and over again. In proof of this, it was scarcely necessary to allude to the instances in which the pope had invoked the aid both of the arms and councils of this country. He concluded by observing, that he had demonstrated to the House, that an almost constant intercourse, through some channel or other, had always been kept up with the Roman court; from which the inference was obvious, that it must continue to exist, in which case it would be both wise and dignified to forsake the underground channels through which it had so long been effected, and to conduct it henceforth in an open and undisguised manner, and in a way which would render its conduct more amenable to public opinion. Of late, the relations of Europe had grown more

and more complicated, as they advanced in importance, and he considered it essential in the present state of affairs, that her Majesty's government should not be debarred from putting itself in direct political communication with a power which exercised so great an influence over Christendom."

The measure, after undergoing some discussion in detail, chiefly on verbal points, was finally agreed to, and became the law of the land. Up to the time of writing the present pages, however, its provisions have not been acted upon.

On the 5th of September a session unusually protracted, was brought to a close, by the following speech from the throne, which her Majesty delivered in person:—

"MY LORDS, AND GENTLEMEN,

"I am happy to be able to release you from the duties of a laborious and protracted session.

"The Act for the Prevention of Crime and Outrage in Ireland, which received my assent at the commencement of the session, was attended by the most beneficial effects. The open display of arms intended for criminal purposes, was checked; the course of justice was no longer interrupted; and several atrocious murderers, who had spread terror through the country, were apprehended, tried, and convicted.

"The distress in Ireland, consequent upon successive failures in the production of food, has been mitigated by the application of the law for the relief of the poor, and by the amount of charitable contributions raised in other parts of the United Kingdom.

"On the other hand, organized confederacies took advantage of the existing pressure, to excite my suffering subjects to rebellion. Hopes of plunder and confiscation were held out to tempt the distressed, while the most visionary prospects were exhibited to the ambitious. In this conjuncture I applied to your loyalty and wisdom for increased powers; and, strengthened by your prompt concurrence, my govern-



ment was enabled to defeat, in a few days, machinations which had been prepared during many months. The energy and decision shown by the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland in the emergency deserve my warmest approbation.

“In the midst of these difficulties you have continued your labours for the improvement of the law. The act for facilitating the sale of encumbered estates will, I trust, gradually remove an evil of great magnitude in the social state of Ireland.

“The system of perpetual entails of land established in Scotland produced very serious evils, both to heirs of entail and to the community; and I have had great satisfaction in seeing it amended upon principles which have long been found to operate beneficially in this part of the United Kingdom.

“I have given my cordial assent to the measures which have in view the improvement of the public health, and I entertain an earnest hope that a foundation has been laid for continual advances in this beneficial work.

“GENTLEMEN OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS,

“I have to thank you for the readiness with which you have granted the supplies necessary for the public service. I shall avail myself of every opportunity which the exigencies of the state may allow for enforcing economy.

“MY LORDS, AND GENTLEMEN,

“I have renewed, in a formal manner, my diplomatic relations with the government of France. The good understanding between the two countries has continued without the slightest interruption.

“Events of deep importance have disturbed the internal tranquillity of many of the states of Europe, both in the north and in the south. These events have led to hostilities between neighbouring countries.

“I am employing my good offices, in concert with other

friendly powers, to bring to an amicable settlement these differences, and I trust that our efforts may be successful.

"I am rejoiced to think that an increasing sense of the value of peace encourages the hope that the nations of Europe may continue in the enjoyment of its blessings.

"Amidst these convulsions, I have had the satisfaction of being able to preserve peace for my own dominions, and to maintain our domestic tranquillity. The strength of our institutions has been tried, and has not been found wanting. I have studied to preserve the people committed to my charge in the enjoyment of that temperate freedom which they so justly value. My people, on their side, feel too sensibly the advantages of order and security, to allow the promoters of pillage and confusion any chance of success in their wicked designs.

"I acknowledge with grateful feelings the many marks of loyalty and attachment which I have received from all classes of my people. It is my earnest hope that by cultivating respect to the law, and obedience to the precepts of religion, the liberties of this people may, by the blessing of Almighty God, be perpetuated."

The session thus terminated was chiefly memorable for its unusual duration ; its large promises, and mean performances ; its prolixity of speech ; its slowness to pass measures of a reformatory tendency, and its alacrity to discuss and carry those of a coercive character. Mr. D'Israeli—who seemed as if he had snatched the mantle formerly worn by Lord Lyndhurst, and become the regular parliamentary Mentor, or accuser-general, of the Whigs—reviewed the doings of the session, and laid all the faults, with which the public had hitherto been content to load the back of the House, upon the backs of her Majesty's ministers. His speech contained an able, though scarcely an impartial or very benevolent, abstract of the doings of parliament, and of the

administration, from the first assembling of the House in November of the previous year, to its ultimate prorogation. Mr. D'Israeli drew the conclusions from the facts which he adduced, that ministers, and not the House, were to blame, for all the prolixity and waste of time that had occurred; that if there had been delays, it was not the forms of the House which were responsible, but the ministerial blunders in the sugar bill, the numerous budgets of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the crude measures launched into the House without due foresight or preparation, and the general vacillation and incompetency of the government. Lord John Russell's reply, though not equal as an oratorical effort, to the brilliant and ill-natured attack of the Protectionist sharp-shooter, was by no means unsuccessful. His lordship passed over, without other comment than a slight deprecation, the increasing long-windedness of the representatives of the people, and maintained, that, with sedition in England, incipient rebellion in Ireland, and convulsion in Europe, the work of administration was the chief business to which the government was bound to direct its attention; and that neither the government nor the House was to blame for the little progress that had been made with measures of a purely legislative character, seeing that sedition in England had been met with a vigorous arm; that rebellion in Ireland had been suppressed; that revolutions on the continent had not shaken the institutions of Great Britain; and that, however convulsed the state of Europe might have been, peace had hitherto been preserved in England.—The country was no doubt prepared to forgive, to some extent, both the House and the government, for the sins of omission, for which the session became notorious, in consideration of the great advantages which had been derived from the vigorous maintenance of public order, for which Lord John Russell took credit to himself, and which undoubtedly signalized the

year 1848. But, nevertheless, it did not shut its eyes to the evils resulting from the interminable speechifying in which men of all parties indulged, from the want of care and discrimination and wisdom displayed by successive governments, in introducing and discussing, in March, April, May, and June, measures which were certain to be abandoned as soon as August began to unfold visions of grouse and red-deer before the expectant eyes of jaded and home-sick legislators, weary of the atmosphere of St. Stephen's, and panting for the fresh air of the forest or the moorland. The fact seemed to be, that there was habitually far too much law-making in Great Britain. The abandonment of so many bills every session was not in itself an evil; the evil lay in their introduction, and in the waste of time occasioned by their discussion, stage after stage, until that final period, when August hurried them, not prematurely but satisfactorily, into the gloomy limbo of the recess. It was a subject of regret that large measures, such as the Repeal of the Navigation Laws and the Health of Towns bills, either made no progress at all, or were mutilated, and perverted from their original intention; but few regretted, with Mr. D'Israeli, the abandonment of the 47 bills whose fate he deplored; or rejoiced with Lord John Russell, that although 47 had been abandoned by their projectors, the government had carried no less than 105 bills, out of 125 which it introduced at the commencement of the session.



## CHAPTER XVI.

DIFFICULTIES OF THE IRISH POOR LAW—DEATH OF LORD  
GEORGE BENTINCK, ETC.—SESSION OF 1849.

THE interval between the parliamentary sessions of 1848 and 1849, was a period of comparative calm. The country was beginning to recover from the financial shocks and political troubles with which it had been assailed during the preceding twelvemonth; commerce was resumed with activity; but was kept within its legitimate boundaries. The insane speculation which preceded the panic, had wrought, to some extent, its own cure. The revenue showed a progressive increase, and amid these symptoms of extending prosperity; and while the labouring classes were fully employed, political strife lost much of its usual acerbity, and nearly all its danger. Even the trials of the few ultra-democratic enthusiasts—who in the fervour created by the French Revolution of February, 1848, allowed themselves to be carried out of their depth into those dangerous currents, where disaffection and rebellion are not easily to be distinguished from each other—were commenced and finished amid but slight popular sympathy. Their conviction excited an interest so small in amount, as to prove even to themselves that they had miscalculated, not only their time, but the temper of the public, when they talked of establishing the charter by physical force. In Ireland, as already stated, the silly rebellion, headed by Mr. Smith O'Brien and his colleagues, was promptly and efficiently suppressed. If the rebellion itself were mock-heroic, the trial and conviction of the ringleaders partook largely of the same

character. The majesty of the law was successfully vindicated; and "Repeal," a word which in the mouth of the late Daniel O'Connell had been a spell to evoke the angry passions of the multitude, became, if not a phrase of contempt, an empty sound, signifying nothing, and powerless even to raise the pence and shillings of the week's "Rent," which still continued to be demanded from the starving peasantry. But although these were favourable circumstances, and although the horrors of actual famine had been to a great extent mitigated by the subscriptions of the charitable, there were still evidences of agrarian or social mis-rule, as well as wide-spread discontent, which convinced the careful observer, that all that had hitherto been done, had been in alleviation only, and not in cure, of the evils of Ireland.

The last great legislative experiment in that portion of the empire had been the introduction of a Poor-law, based upon the principles of that which had worked with generally good results in England. The policy and justice of the measure were undeniable, but the remedy had been too long delayed, to be immediately effective. In the attempt to put it into execution, a state of things was developed, which made the political and social economist doubt, for awhile, whether the remedy were not as bad as the disease, or worse, and to question whether this measure, intended with so humane an object, was not in reality an oppression upon the proprietors of the soil, without being a benefit to the people. So fearful was the pauperism to be not only maintained but combated, so unable were the nominal owners of property to bear the burden imposed upon them, that it seemed more than probable, for many months, that the poor-law would break down altogether, and that all classes, high and low, would be involved in one common ruin. The small farmers—every one in fact who could scrape up sufficient money to pay a

passage across the Atlantic—fled from the country; and many of this class, pretending a poverty which was not real, hoarded their money, refused to pay their rent, and quitted the country indebted in considerable sums to their landlords. Misery, and the dread of misery, demoralized the people; and in many whole districts of Ireland, particularly in the south and west, it was not simply the peasantry, and the cotters, but the small traders of towns, who forgot their honesty under the apprehension of famine. In many unions the paupers, including many persons who still retained possession of land, swarmed in thousands to claim the statutory modicum of relief; and when an attempt was made to levy the necessary rate upon the owners or occupiers of the surrounding property, it was found that to do so was a physical impossibility, the latter being already in a state of actual beggary, or but a slight degree removed from it.

The great misfortune in the case of Ireland was, that the poor-law had not been introduced a century previously—before population had so enormously increased; before the people had been reduced to a precarious, insufficient, lazy, and demoralizing diet of potatoes; and before the landlords, drawing rents far beyond the ability of the people to pay, had rushed into extravagance and debt, and become too impoverished to be made available for the prevention or extirpation of habitual pauperism. But the sudden introduction of the poor-law—just and necessary as the measure was—only seemed to widen the circle of misery. The cry of distress arose, not only from the over-abundant people, but from the class immediately above them. Farmers, tradesmen, and landed proprietors, were equally pinched or crushed beneath its operation. Without the poor-law, the multitude would have perished on the road-side, of famine and fever; with it, the people seemed as if they were about to be converted into contented paupers, and the property of

the landlords was all but confiscated. Such was the social condition of a beautiful and naturally fertile country, and of a generous, quick, and intelligent people; produced by a complication of evils, acting from age to age, and from generation to generation. In the autumn and winter of 1848, twenty poor law unions, it appeared, were absolutely bankrupt; the population of which was nearly two millions; and many others verged upon that state. Rates varying from 15 to 23 shillings in the pound upon a fictitious rental, betrayed fearfully the utter hopelessness of the case, unless extraneous aid were afforded. To mention one instance only of this melancholy and perplexing state of affairs: In the Bantry union, it appeared that in the winter of 1848 there were 9,000 paupers on the books, whilst the total valuation of the union was only £37,000. This fearful state of the country excited the comments of the press during the whole of the recess, and was one of the first subjects that claimed the attention of parliament.

Meanwhile, the interval immediately following the close of the session, was signalized by one or two events,—which although relating strictly to the personal history of individuals, deserve notice from their connection with the life and career of Sir Robert Peel. In the latter end of September, suddenly, and under circumstances more than usually melancholy, died Lord George Bentinck,—a young nobleman of considerable ability and promise. His lordship appeared in his usual health in the morning, and set out for the paternal mansion of Walbeck, for a solitary walk across the fields; to dine in the afternoon with Lord Mansers at Thoresby park. Not appearing according to his appointment, alarm was excited—and a messenger being dispatched, his lordship was found lying across a path in the meadow. Life was quite extinct; and on the investigation before the coroner, it appeared that death had been caused



by spasm of the heart. This lamented nobleman, after wasting the better portion of his early manhood in the questionable arena of the turf, his favourite amusement, found himself unexpectedly called into active political life, as the leader of the great protectionist party which set itself up in opposition to Sir Robert Peel, when that statesman finally abandoned the restrictive system. Though possessed of no very sound or intimate acquaintance with the principles of the great questions in the discussion of which he thus found himself obliged to engage, it was known that Lord George Bentinck was a man of quick perception, and indefatigable industry; and the assiduity with which he set himself to work in getting up details bearing upon the various branches of political economy and finance, upon which he had to speak from time to time, astonished alike his political friends and opponents. Of a gentlemanly, not to say distinguished earriage, his action in the senate was by no means graceful or commanding, and his voice was naturally monotonous and unmusical. Yet in spite of these natural disqualifications for oratory, Lord George Bentinck had an intensity of moral purpose, an imperturbable coolness, and withal an impetuosity of manner, which enabled him to disregard and overcome difficulties which many other statesmen, much more highly gifted, would have trembled to contemplate. To come forward and oppose the greatest practical statesman of his age—perhaps of any age—at a moment when the latter had already the great bulk of the commercial and thinking portion of the community in his favour, and to set himself up as the champion of a party already defeated and discomfited, was an act of such ultra-chivalrous devotion, as to look like folly; and which a wiser and more experienced statesman would have hesitated to undertake. Yet this arduous and thankless task Lord George Bentinck did undertake, when called upon to do so by what he

considered to be the voice of duty ; and he who had but seldom spoken at all, and scarcely ever addressed the House for five consecutive minutes, inaugurated his new functions, and the new political party which was formed under him, by a speech of five hours' duration. The scene presented by the House during this long address, was a remarkable one. His lordship was scarcely audible during the greater part of it ; his voice, unused to such exertion, failed him before he had proceeded half way through it ; and yet to the end he went on without interruption, amidst the most respectful silence of the House. Upon subsequent occasions, the new opposition leader warmed with his work, and his voice recovering its power, he often made considerable impression by the vigour of his attacks, if not by the soundness or depth of his arguments.

For his reputation as a statesman, perhaps it is well that Lord George Bentinck died when he did ; had he survived but a few months longer, the practical verification of the soundness of the great principles he had volunteered to oppose, the utter fallaciousness of the old dogmas he had undertaken to defend, became so palpable and so undeniable, that, to have pursued, in the face of such proofs, the course he had chalked out for himself, could not but have been attended with continual discomfiture and humiliation. As it was, his name will survive as the last champion of protectionist principles, just before those principles were discredited by the resistless operation of opposing facts. His sudden death filled the public with grief and regret. There was so much of manly honesty in his character—such gallantry in the battle he fought in a falling cause,—he was such a sturdy friend to, and such an admirable representative of, the national love of fair play, and he combined in his person so many of the virtues that the people of this country are most accustomed to honour, that the melancholy termination of his

brief, brilliant, and fitful career, excited an amount of sympathy and sorrow far beyond his real importance as a public or a private individual.

In November of the same year, Viscount Melbourne, an earlier and more celebrated political antagonist of Sir Robert Peel, died of natural decline, in the 68th year of his age. The struggle between the two parties, led respectively by these two ex-ministers, in 1835, will ever remain distinguished as one of remarkable interest and importance in our political history; and the details have already been fully given in a preceding portion of this work. The death of Lord Melbourne was without political importance. He had outlived enmity; and men of all parties did justice to his public usefulness at a remarkable period, and to the many estimable qualities of head and heart, which endeared him more especially to those who enjoyed the privilege of more intimate acquaintance with his private worth, and who could appreciate his generous character, his unaffected cordiality of disposition—his wit, that never wounded where it struck—and his learning, that might have adorned the literature of his country, if his lot had been cast in a less conspicuous position than that to which he was called.

Strangely in illustration of the eventful history of these times, we find the fact recorded, that about this period (the end of November) Louis Philippe, the ex-king of the French, and a numerous party, including M. Guizot, the late prime minister of France, enjoyed for some days the hospitality of Sir Robert Peel at Drayton Manor.

Immediately that the ex-king arrived in England, a dispirited—and, as it seemed, a penniless exile—Sir Robert Peel offered him the use of Drayton Manor as a residence. Louis Philippe gratefully declined the generous and considerate offer; but, on the first convenient opportunity, paid Sir Robert a visit, to thank him personally for his courtesy.

The visit was strictly private ; and the conversations of those three remarkable and illustrious persons, if preserved—as it is to be hoped they have been—will probably afford posterity the instruction which contemporaries have not been permitted to derive from them.

The interest which Sir Robert Peel had for some time been taking in the cause of national education, and of which unquestionable evidence exists in some of his late parliamentary speeches, was still farther, and in a practical manner, illustrated in a short address which he made to the subscribers to the library and reading-room at Tamworth, on the 26th January, 1849, a few days before the meeting of parliament. On this occasion, he stated his intentions with regard to the future arrangements of a school for the poor, which had been endowed by his late father. A vote of thanks having been given to the right honourable baronet for his support of the institution, he, in acknowledging the compliment, said:—"He proposed to extend the benefit of education to a greater number of persons in Tamworth by making some modification in the school. The endowment left by his father amounted to £170 a year, and was, he conceived, specially applicable to the education of the poor ; though ample power was left to modify the school, or even discontinue it altogether, still the original intention was to afford the advantage of education to the poorer classes, and the modification he proposed was such as would increase the means of giving them a moral and religious education. It had always appeared to him, however, that while so much attention was paid to the poorer classes, the class above them was neglected ; and it would cost a tradesman £20 or £30 to give an education to his son at a boarding-school, while an equal education was supplied almost gratuitously to the poor. A foundation was thus being laid for the conversion of the order of society ; they were educating those who had to



depend upon their labour for subsistence above the education which the middle classes were unable to give their children. If he could so modify the school endowed by his father, as to make it more conducive to the interests of the poorer classes, and at the same time give facilities for the education of the middle classes, he thought he should confer a great benefit upon the town."

Sir Robert, after entering into some pecuniary and other details of no interest except to the people of Tamworth, proceeded to state that, for the future, "he proposed to have two classes of scholars in the school, the children of the poor and the middle classes; and in order to prevent an objection that might otherwise be raised against the children of the middle mixing with the poorer class, on account of their untidy appearance or want of cleanliness, he proposed that each child of the poor should be provided with a proper and suitable dress; and in making the selection of children to be put on the foundation, care would be taken to promote morality among the poor—the selection to the foundation would be a kind of reward for good behaviour on the part of the parent or child. He did not mean, however, that the child of the drunkard or profligate should be excluded from the school, for it would be a merey to the child to remove him from such influence, but as a rule, the selection would be as a reward of merit either on the part of the parents or child. The whole parish of Tamworth would be included, and farmers, shopkeepers, and retail dealers of every description, would have the opportunity of giving to their sons what he would venture to call a first-rate education in all branches of useful knowledge. They would not be taught the classics, but they would receive a useful education;—geography, natural philosophy, history, and science in its different branches, would be taught by the master. He proposed that this education should be

given at a very moderate sum. The education would be equal to that imparted in a boarding-school; yet he proposed, in order that education might be promoted, that £2 a year, or 10s. a quarter, to be paid in advance, should only be required for each pupil, and the sum which might be received from such a source he intended to apply for the benefit of the poor. For instance, should there be fifty paying pupils in the school, the sum of £100 received from those pupils would be applied for the further benefit of the poor by enlarging the school, and making it accommodate double the present number. The objection entertained to the two classes of children mixing together, was giving way; and by providing a decent dress for the poor, he did not expect much objection to exist in this case. By the means of this school, a tradesman with five sons would be able to give them the best education that could be afforded, at a cost of £10 a year only. That was the plan he proposed to adopt, and he trusted that every encouragement would be given to it. The school, he would further add, would continue in connection with the Established Church, but no objection would be made to the reception of the children of those who dissented from the church. In addition to the inspection of the government inspector, he should request, as he should be frequently absent from the neighbourhood, four or five gentlemen, in connection with the vicar and minister, to inspect the school, in order that justice might be done alike to the paying scholars and the poorer class. A treasurer would also be appointed; and the master having no interest in the payments, would have no inducement to neglect the education of the poor in order to attend to the richer."

The proof afforded by this short speech, of his ceaseless activity of mind; his constant desire to do good; and his increasing conviction of the importance of the question of

public education, excited much satisfaction at the time, in the minds of those who had begun to look upon Sir Robert Peel as the most practical reformer of the age; and the one who might be expected to aid this cause as effectually as he had aided every other to which he had at any time directed his energies. Unhappily these expectations were not destined to be realized.

Parliament reassembled for the dispatch of business on the 1st of February 1849, and was opened with the following speech from the throne, delivered by her Majesty in person:—

“MY LORDS, AND GENTLEMEN,

“The period being arrived at which the business of parliament is usually resumed, I have called you together for the discharge of your important duties.

“It is satisfactory to me to be enabled to state, that both in the north and in the south of Europe, the contending parties have consented to a suspension of arms, for the purpose of negotiating terms of peace.

“The hostilities carried on in the island of Sicily were attended with circumstances so revolting, that the British and French admirals were impelled by motives of humanity to interpose, and to stop the further effusion of blood.

“I have availed myself of the interval thus obtained, to propose, in conjunction with France, to the king of Naples, an arrangement calculated to produce a permanent settlement of affairs in Sicily. The negociation on these matters is still pending.

“It has been my anxious endeavour, in offering my good offices to the various contending powers, to prevent the extension of the calamities of war, and to lay the foundations for a lasting and honourable peace. It is my constant desire to maintain with foreign states the most friendly relations.

“As soon as the interests of the public service will permit, I shall direct the papers connected with these transactions to be laid before you.

“A rebellion of a formidable character has broken out in the Punjaub, and the Governor-General of India has been compelled, for the preservation of the peace of the country, to assemble a considerable force, which is now engaged in military operations against the insurgents. But the tranquillity of British India has not been affected by these unprovoked disturbances.

“I again commend to your attention the restrictions imposed on commerce by the Navigation Laws.

“If you shall find that these laws are, in whole or in part, unnecessary for the maintenance of our maritime power, while they fetter trade and industry, you will no doubt deem it right to repeal or modify their provisions.

“GENTLEMEN OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS,

“I have directed the estimates for the service of the year to be laid before you; they will be framed with the most anxious attention to a wise economy.

“The present aspect of affairs has enabled me to make large reductions on the estimates of last year.

“MY LORDS, AND GENTLEMEN,

“I observe with satisfaction that this portion of the United Kingdom has remained tranquil amidst the convulsions which have disturbed so many parts of Europe.

“The insurrection in Ireland has not been renewed; but a spirit of disaffection still exists, and I am compelled, to my great regret, to ask for a continuance, for a limited time, of those powers which in the last session you deemed necessary for the preservation of the public tranquillity.

“I have great satisfaction in stating, that commerce is reviving from those shocks which, at the commencement of last session, I had to deplore.



"The condition of the manufacturing districts is likewise more encouraging than it has been for a considerable period.

"It is also gratifying to me to observe that the state of the revenue is one of progressive improvement.

"I have to lament, however, that another failure in the potato crop has caused very severe distress in some parts of Ireland.

"The operation of the laws for the relief of the poor in Ireland will properly be a subject of your inquiry, and any measure by which those laws may be beneficially amended, and the condition of the people may be improved, will receive my cordial assent.

"It is with pride and thankfulness that I advert to the loyal spirit of my people, and that attachment to our institutions which has animated them during a period of commercial difficulty, deficient production of food, and political revolution.

"I look to the protection of Almighty God for favour in our continued progress, and I trust you will assist me in upholding the fabric of the constitution, founded as it is on the principles of freedom and of justice."

The session opened under somewhat remarkable circumstances. The old corn-law expired on Wednesday, the 31st of January: the session of parliament commenced on the following day. On the Wednesday, Mr. Cobden, Mr. Bright, Mr. George Wilson, and all the more prominent members and friends of the defunct anti-corn-law league, met together in Manchester, in their ancient Free-trade Hall, to celebrate by a banquet, for the last time, their victory over "Protection;" and to usher in, with speeches and songs, the first day, or rather the first moment, of free-trade in corn. Five minutes before midnight, the band struck up the air of the song that had become popular under the title of "The Good Time Coming;" and an assemblage, numbering

upwards of two thousand people, joined in the chorus. At the termination of the song, the clock having struck twelve, the chairman announced that the "good time" had come, that Protection had ceased, and called upon the company to show their appreciation of it by their cheers. The whole assemblage rose, and cheered vociferously for several minutes. On the first day of free-trade in corn, the parliament assembled, and the reports of the Manchester banquet filled the columns of the journals.

At the opening of the session the opposition gave practical evidence of its discontent and hostility; Lord Stanley in the Upper House, and Mr. D'Israeli in the Lower, moving amendments conveying a sweeping condemnation of the whole policy of the government, domestic and foreign, of the following tenor:

"We regret to be compelled humbly to represent to your Majesty, that neither your Majesty's relations with foreign powers, nor the state of the revenue, nor the condition of the commercial and manufacturing interests of the country, are such as, in our opinion, justify us in addressing your Majesty in language of congratulation; and that large portions of the agricultural and colonial interests of this empire are labouring under a state of progressive declension, calculated to excite serious apprehensions and anxieties."

It is needless to go over the arguments used in enforcement of this position, particularly as detached features of the policy of the ministry were brought under review in motions of more tangible and specific character, on subsequent occasions. It may be sufficient to say that the Duke of Wellington came to the support of the government with a few fitting observations; and that Lord Stanley's amendment was negatived by a small majority of 2 only; 52 voting against it, and 50 for it. In the House of Commons, on the other hand, after two nights' debate, Mr. D'Israeli's amend-

ment was negatived without a division. As a clue to the tone of the House, however, it should be added, that this result took place after an attempt at further adjournment, immediately after the close of an able speech by Lord Palmerston in defence of his policy. The motion for adjournment was negatived by an overwhelming majority of 221 against 80.

## CHAPTER XVII.

IRISH POOR LAW—RATE IN AID BILL—SIR ROBERT PEEL'S  
PROPOSITION.

ONE of the first acts of the government was to apply for the temporary renewal of the Habeas Corpus Suspension act, based upon an application from the Lord Lieutenant, in which they were supported by Sir Robert Peel. After a good show of opposition by the Repeal and ultra-liberal party of Ireland, it was agreed to.

But measures of relief, as usual in the case of Ireland, went hand in hand with measures of coercion. On the 7th of February, within a week after the opening of the session, the Chancellor of the Exchequer moved for an advance of £50,000, for the temporary relief of certain unions in Ireland; committees were appointed in both Houses to inquire into the operation of the poor-laws in that country, with a view to applying a remedy to an acknowledged evil of great extent and urgency; and shortly afterwards, Lord John Russell brought in a bill (based upon the report of the Commons' committee) for levying a "rate in aid" of the insolvent unions in Ireland, of sixpence in the pound upon all rateable property in Ireland for a period of two years.

This proposition was warmly but ineffectually contested in parliament, and out of it, especially in the north of Ireland. The agitation that ensued lasted upwards of two months. On the 5th of March, Sir Robert Peel came to the aid of public opinion, by unfolding the first rudiments of a plan for the regeneration of Ireland. He said—



“That it was now evident the proprietors had, in many parts of Ireland, made great efforts to meet the calamity that had fallen on the country. In many instances, when the rates had not been paid, utter inability to pay was too often the reason of non-payment. Such being the case, he thought it would be most unfair to excite prejudices against the Irish landlords in the minds of the people of England. For his own part, he could not think of leaving the unfortunate persons, now reduced to the very brink of destitution, to die, without extending the hand of charity to save them. He had voted for the grant of £50,000; and, were there no other means of preventing the people from famishing, he would not refuse his assent to another vote of a similar description. He, therefore, was willing to vote for the resolutions proposed by the government, and was prepared to contend, that the rest of the United Kingdom had a right to call on Ireland to make great sacrifices in order to support her poor. In England the principle of vicinage was adopted, and the adjoining parish was called on to aid a parish in distress; but the principle of vicinage could not at present be applied to Ireland. A general rate in aid was the only rate of the sort that could be levied.” The right honourable baronet proceeded to give his opinions upon the mode of permanently changing the condition of Ireland. Having referred to the settlement of Ulster by James I., he said that “he saw no hope for the improvement of the west of Ireland, except from some comprehensive plan for transferring the land from its present to entirely new proprietors, with new feelings and new spirit, who would have the capital, the ability, and the energy, to cultivate the soil properly. This indispensable change of property should not be effected by means of individual barter, but through the instrumentality of a commission, which might be appointed by the government, who could get possession of the property, and then arrange the

distribution of it; but that religious distinction, which was a part of the plan of James I., in the settlement of Ulster, should be avoided. Few, if any, transfers would take place under the act passed in 1848, and therefore he believed that some such commission as the one he suggested would be absolutely necessary."

This short speech gave great satisfaction both in England and in Ireland, and hopes were very generally expressed, that this sagacious statesman would take courage from the favour with which it was received, to speak out more boldly and explicitly. Sir Robert Peel was not slow to take the hint; and, on the occasion of the debate on the rate in aid, delivered one of the most masterly and brilliant orations that ever fell from his lips. Going beyond the mere measures of temporary expediency immediately before the House, he boldly grappled with the causes of the great social disease, and proposed, in more precise and explicit terms than before, a remedy which more than any other could effectually remove it, namely, the substitution of a solvent for an insolvent landed proprietary.

He commenced by observing "that he would address himself at once to the question of the present state of Ireland, which was twofold: first, whether they should leave the people of Ireland to be supported exclusively by the electoral divisions and unions in which they lived; and secondly, if they were of opinion that some extraneous aid was necessary, from what source should it come? He could not reconcile himself to give a vote which would throw the existence of the people of Ireland upon those individual unions or divisions. From the papers before the House, he had observed, that in many of those unions very great efforts had been made for the support of the poor; and he thought great injustice was done in this country to the landed proprietors asso-

ciated with those districts. He found in those papers the most conclusive evidence that most strenuous local exertions had been made in many parts of the country, that there had been a willing submission to the law, and that if the whole amount of the rates had not been paid, it was because it was a physical impossibility. The attempts, therefore, that had been made to create a prejudice against Irish proprietors in those parts of Ireland, were most unjust. He did not deny that in many other places proprietors had shrunk from their responsibilities, and neglected to discharge their duties—to say nothing of those evictions which in any case it was impossible to defend—but upon the evidence of these papers it was clearly unjust to cast indiscriminate censure on the landed proprietors of Ireland. Now, to refuse extraneous aid in the present circumstances of Ireland, would be to increase the famine and the spread of disease; and he could not believe, whatever they might think of the past policy of the House of Commons, that they would refuse such aid, and adopt the alternative. He might admit that the system of indiscriminate relief had the lamentable consequence of preventing self-reliance and habits of industry in persons who were able to work, and that it was much better for such persons to use strenuous and continued exertion for their own support, than to rely upon charity. But, if it were concluded otherwise, what answer could they make to those whom they had taught to live upon charity? If the policy was wrong, the House of Commons was the erring party, and ought not to inflict the penalty on others.

“Ireland had been, for the last three or four years, in a condition for which there was no parallel to be found in its history. During that time every rational expectation of amelioration had been swept away, and millions had been lost, not through idleness on the part of the people, or unwillingness to work, but as a conse-

quence of the failure of their ordinary food. By the past conduct of that House, the Irish people had been taught to rely upon benevolence and charity ; and he never could consent, from whatever source it might be derived, and whatever might be the consequence of teaching continued reliance upon that aid instead of industry and toil, to adopt the horrible alternative of exposing that people to additional famine and disease. He had voted for the £50,000 ; and if there were no other means—whatever other measures he might propose in order to avert future evil, and henceforth amend such a course—he did not hesitate to say he would give another vote of the kind, rather than leave the people to perish in that way. Upon that ground he would give his vote for continuing assistance from some other source than the property of unions in Ireland. Then came the second question—from what source ought that assistance to come? He thought that other parts of the empire had a right to call upon Ireland to make a strenuous effort to rescue the unions from these burdens. He did not rest that opinion on the principle that the taxation of Ireland was unequal as compared with that of England. If he put it on that ground, the logical deduction was—the adoption of equal taxation. If he were satisfied that Ireland ought to pay the assessed taxes, and be subjected to the income-tax, he could not consent to release her from the obligation of contributing equally with England, by only subjecting her to 6d. in the pound on a certain description of property only. By that course he would be subjecting real property and exempting personal property, which ought not to be done in the case of the income-tax. If it were said that this 6d. in the pound was to be in lieu of an income-tax then, *ex concessio*, it was contended that personal property ought to be exempted. He thought, therefore, that Ireland ought to make a great effort to prevent the tremendous evil



connected with the present distress, on several grounds. In this country the principle was adopted in the case of a union manifestly unable to support its poor, of subjecting the vicinage to the burden. They did not call upon the public revenue, but took the next parish, and, if that did not suffice, they subjected the next parish to that same penalty. At first sight, there appeared no great justice in subjecting one district, which was able to support its own poor, to the support of their neighbours, with whom they had no connection. But it was not objected to, and worked well in England. If they were to try the same plan in Ireland, they would go on rendering adjoining parishes liable, one after another, until they were all involved in the same calamity. He would prefer a general rate in aid.

“Another reason for asking Ireland to make a vigorous effort towards her own relief was this: she had not yet repaid the advance of £1,200,000 for workhouses. Why did Ireland refuse to pay that? He had heard no repudiation of, or refusal to pay, the debt due in this country to the Exchequer, for money advanced to erect union workhouses. He had, with regret, heard it stated, that the government could not levy the proposed rate, except at the expense of a rebellion. When he looked to the private contributions given in aid of the Irish people, he could not believe that any Irishman could be found, certainly not in that House, who would counsel his countrymen to resist it. The £1,200,000 for workhouses was advanced to Ireland with the full conviction that it would be repaid; but he believed not only that no more than £36,000 had been repaid, but that there was an actual repudiation of the remainder. There were, certainly, some exceptions: the union of Newtownards, for example, had paid their full share. But what was alarming in the matter was this, that some of the prosperous unions were saying, ‘What have you collected in the south? If

you have collected nothing, then we of the north will not pay you anything.' If Ireland would make a vigorous effort to pay that debt within a short space of time, and not spread it over many years; if she would say, 'Let us pay it in the way you propose, by 6d. in the pound,' he was not sure that he would not accept it. Now, although honourable members ridiculed by an incredulous laugh the idea of repayment of a debt which was willingly paid in England, and ought to be paid in Ireland, he thought he might very well give a preference to a general aid over that which would make the next union responsible for the defaults of its neighbour; and he was even willing to oppose the proposition of the noble lord, if Ireland would undertake to pay the balance of the £1,200,000 by a general rate of 6d. in the next three months. If they would not do that, and would not point out any other mode by which Ireland could be made to contribute, he could not consent to oppose the noble lord's proposal, incomplete and ineffectual though, he feared, it would be, for the present necessities of Ireland."

Having thus briefly disposed of the immediate difficulty, the right honourable baronet came at once to the greater question involved in the future fate and condition of Ireland:—

"There was a still more important matter, to which he hoped the House would direct its attention, namely, what was to be the condition of Ireland in future? Should the House consent to impose upon Ireland, exclusively, something in the way of taxation, whatever its nature, for the purpose of relieving her in her present difficulties, still that temporary advance would not relieve them from the duty of considering what were the future prospects of Ireland. He had read the papers before them with deep and painful attention. He would not weary the House by adverting to the details of the different unions, but take a single union which formed a fair

example of the rest, and briefly state what were the unquestionable facts presented by these papers, given them from the highest official sources ; and he would then ask the House to consider what, after the present proposal, were to be the condition and future prospects of Ireland ? He would take the union of Ballina, as it stood separate from the others, and as there was more recent information respecting it. He found Mr. Bourke stating, that, on the 27th January, 1849, there were 3,270 persons occupying the workhouse ; and, in addition to them, that there were 18,879 receiving out-door relief. Mr. Hamilton calculated that the number of persons likely to require relief in this portion of the union before next harvest, was 27,000, including in- and out-door relief, and that of these, 4,300 were able-bodied, and 14,000 dependents. Surely, it became the duty of that House to look before them a little, and consider what would be the condition of that union after the present proposed relief should have been afforded ? He found that the lamentable state of this union could not be fairly imputed to the proprietors of land. Let those who thought otherwise, and supposed that these gentlemen had made no sufficient exertion to meet this great calamity, read the papers connected with this union. The amount of rate and the arrears was £17,000 ; £12,000 had been collected, as the government officer stated, with but little trouble to the collectors, without the necessity of frequent legal proceedings, without assistance from the military or the police. He had read the evidence of gentlemen connected with that union ; and the account they gave of their own exertions, the number of persons they had relieved, the reductions they had made in their establishments, their willingness to contribute to the utmost of their power to mitigate the prevailing distress, showed that great credit was due to them for their efforts. The vice-guardian employed by the government, said—

‘The striking another rate, under present circumstances, would extinguish the little hope which is still to be found in the union. There are thousands of acres, formerly occupied and cultivated, which have now more the appearance of having been devastated by an enemy, than anything I can compare it to. The first failure of the potato crop brought to light the miserably rotten social state of this part of the kingdom. The poorer classes are saving their potatoes for seed, and would as soon part with their lives as consume them. It is very doubtful whether the future success of the potato crop would enable the landlords to pay fair wages for a fair day’s work. If the potatoes succeed, the principal effect will be to raise the price of land, and bring about the old state of things, notwithstanding the bitter experience of last year.’

“What a melancholy prospect this was for Ireland ! And it did not arise from the neglect or misfeasance of the landlords ; they appeared to have made every effort to contribute to the rate. If the people cultivated the potato, they were exposed to the same miserable calamity as had occurred in the last three or four years ; there might be a false reliance on this food for one or two years ; then entire dependence on it, to the neglect of other means of subsistence ; and then would come a recurrence of the same wretched condition of affairs as before. Let it also be remembered, that, from despair, many portions of the land formerly cultivated were now no longer so. Two causes were in operation, which it was most important to consider. First, there was the danger of relying on the potato for the future subsistence of the people, even if sufficient could be extracted from the ground for that purpose, for one or two years ; and in the next place, several portions of the union were going out of cultivation. In providing the necessary relief, and ensuring the existence



of these people, by extraneous aid for one year or two, was it not most important to consider what other measure could be adopted to mitigate the horrors that might otherwise again overtake them at a very early period—at any rate, to lay the foundation of a better state of things? The prospect was most discouraging. There were no means of giving such abundant subsistence to the people as by the potato, provided the season were a favourable one. At the same time, it was most unwise to rely on that means, which in three successive years had failed, and left the people in absolute want. In other years, in addition to the potato, the people in this union had derived material aid from the supply of fish; but such was the lamentable condition of affairs, that the supply of fish had failed, as well as that of potatoes. The return stated, that the total number of fishermen registered, formerly 2,989, was now reduced to 1,368, and that the number of boats had been reduced from 485 to 224. It was added, that the boats were in a very bad condition. Just let the House picture the future prospect of this union:—the land largely thrown out of cultivation; the supply of fish almost cut off; the boats getting into a worse condition; and the number of persons employed diminishing one half! After all their experience of the uncertain nature of the potato crop, unless some decided effort were made to improve the moral and physical condition of this union, the potato alone would evidently be the only food on which they would have to rely. They would have to run all the risks;—first, from the diminished quantity, owing to the thousands of acres of land that were thrown out of cultivation; and then from the chance of an early recurrence of that calamity, which might not be annual, but which might arise from some mysterious cause with which science was unacquainted. That failure, occurring for three or four successive years, was a subject of consideration

of the utmost importance. It showed the dependence on the potato to be most frail; for, with an appearance of fertility at the commencement of the season, in three or four successive years, excepting a temporary revival in 1847, the autumn had witnessed the entire failure of that article of food. Reliance on such a supply, therefore, must be attended with great doubt and hesitation; and hence, even if the means of subsistence for these people were temporarily supplied by parliament, the future condition of that union—and it was a specimen of the rest—must be a subject of great anxiety and most serious consideration. There were now 27,000 persons to relieve; and these must be provided for till the next harvest. He, for one, was willing to make any effort to rescue them from famine; but it was impossible not to see that their future and permanent condition was that which demanded the most serious attention. He offered any suggestion for the mitigation of these calamities, or for diminishing the danger in prospect, with the utmost hesitation; but he did feel, that the remedy on which they could alone place reliance, which would be slow in its operation, but was the only one offering a hope of safety, was the introduction of new proprietors, who might enter on the possession of the land free from its present incumbrances, while those who engaged in its cultivation would do so with new energies, and be inspired with new hopes. That advantage would be most dearly purchased by any violation of the rights of property. Nothing was so easy as to suggest remedies, overlooking those rights of property which it was the duty of the British legislature, in the first instance, to uphold. At the same time, he thought this was a right of so little value to the present proprietors, if the incumbrances on the land were to be discharged, and with its present prospects—that he could not help thinking it possible for the government, with the sanction of this

House, taking an enlarged view of the whole subject, to devise some means by which new capital might be introduced into the cultivation of the land, and by which the misfortune and despair which necessarily hung over the present proprietors might be removed, and a brighter prospect opened. This rate in aid might produce £1,000,000 from the whole of Ireland, and, supposing England contributed an equal sum, making £2,000,000—if nothing else were done, what was the hope of restoration for Ireland? Might it not, at the expiration of a certain period, be in precisely the same condition? Would they rely on the cultivation of the potato? Probably the next failure might be more frightfully fatal. They ought rather to give due consideration to a measure which would probably introduce a better state of things.

“He might revert to a period when the condition of things was not wholly different from that now existing. In the reign of James I., when the settlement of Ulster took place, in six counties of Ireland there was a large quantity of land in the market, though not so large as the quantity that might now be had in the west of Ireland by arrangement with the proprietors, an arrangement to which there would be no objection in that House. ‘At that time (he quoted from one of the best historians of the period, Parke) land to a great extent had been forfeited—about 500,000 acres in six counties—which had suffered exceedingly in the war, and were reduced to a very desolate condition. The country was full of woods and ravines, which afforded a shelter for assassins and a retreat for robbers. A great number of the inhabitants had perished by the sword, a much greater by famine; the rest were reduced to such extreme poverty, that they were not able, even if willing, to manure the ground; so that the land laid waste in time of war, was likely to continue so in time of peace.’ Sub-

stituting for these words, 'land laid waste by the operation of famine,' the description was exactly applicable to the present state of the country; though the land was certainly not now the refuge of robbers and outlaws, but of those whose fortitude under their severe privations had given them the strongest claim to sympathy and consideration. The historian added, that the lands so laid waste were made a source of great prosperity. Sir Ralph Chichester, then lord-lieutenant, caused surveys to be taken, and the lands to be divided into portions of 2,000, 1,500, and 1,000 acres, which were disposed of to 104 English and Scotch proprietors, 56 surveyors, and 286 native Irishmen, they giving bonds to the government for the performance of their contracts. There was this defect in the settlement, that religious distinctions were permitted. If it were possible to make any such new settlement, his earnest advice, and the universal feeling of the House, would be, that no such distinctions ought to be made. Whatever arrangements they might make, no distinctions in point of religion ought to influence them in any future appropriation. The historian added, that, in consequence of this, 'lands were cultivated, towns and villages were built, trade and commerce were carried on and extended; the people in general were gradually weaned from their former outrage and disorder, and began to apply themselves to labour and industry.' It might be quite impossible now to apply any such principle, in its full extent, to Ireland; but, unless it could be applied in some degree, he saw no hope for the future prosperity of the country. If they were to leave matters exactly where they found them, each union either relying on others, or on votes of public money, he saw no hope of permanent escape from the calamities now pressing upon Ireland. But if they could, without violating any right of property, make such an arrangement with regard to the possession of land, taking care not to establish



any distinction on account of religious profession, then it might be possible, if not to the same extent, at least to some extent, to lay the foundation of future prosperity in that country.

“He was quite aware that an act was passed in the session of 1848, giving facilities for the acquisition of land ; but he greatly feared it would not be effectual without some additional aid and stimulus on the part of the government. Rules had been established, he dared say very wisely, by the Court of Chancery ; but he much feared, particularly with the alteration made in that law at a later period of the session, that the object it had in view, of introducing new proprietors into Ireland, would be defeated. He greatly feared there would not be this transfer of property ; he greatly feared the effect would not be that infusion of new blood into the west of Ireland which was calculated on. He offered any suggestion with the utmost hesitation ; but he felt strongly, that if parliament contented itself with either voting money, or giving a rate in aid over the whole of Ireland, trusting to the potato, and to the present distribution of land in Ireland—at the expiration of the two years for which this rate was granted, the condition of Ireland would be no better. He feared, too, that if they relied on individual purchases, they would make no advance. He thought it would be prudent to appoint some commission, for the purpose of considering the proposed scheme, and to consider the possibility, by their advice and intervention, of effecting that change in the possession of property which was indispensable to any great improvement of the country. If they chose to leave the present proprietors on their land, hardly receiving a nominal rent, encumbered with debt, with no encouragement to exertion, their property so overburdened with poor-rates that it was hardly possible to find either a purchaser or an occupier—then he saw no hope whatever. But if they could con-

trive, through the intervention of the government or the legislature, to establish some intermediate agent, who could get possession of the property on perfectly equitable terms, and then arrange its re-distribution, he should then see hope of a better state of things. If nothing of the kind were done, unless they could, by some means consistent with justice and equity, introduce new capital, new views of improvement, and new enterprise, in the place of that despair and poverty which now overwhelmed the country, he had no hope whatever of its future regeneration. He would do injustice to no man, but he would, through the intervention of a competent authority, acting under government, appointed and supported by them, and having their entire confidence, endeavour to take a comprehensive view of the condition of all these unions. Despair was now overwhelming the proprietors, and without some assistance they could not struggle on. The proposed sixpenny rate in aid would merely administer temporary relief to the poor in some of the unions, while the lands would be left still subject to a pecuniary burden which would discourage either occupation or purchase; for unless some guaranty could be obtained as to these poor-rates, there would evidently be no one disposed to purchase the land.

“The question was—could not the government, by the intervention of some such commission as he had proposed, give a security for these rates? The rules drawn up by the Court of Chancery might be very proper; but they might depend on it there would be no individual purchases under the present system. Surely men might be found who would gratuitously devote their time to rescue Ireland from this state, who would become a medium between the purchaser and the seller, between the government and the occupiers. The condition of twenty unions was so wretched, that it had been found necessary to reject all local assistance, and to

entrust their management to vice-guardians. Would it not be possible, by the intervention of some such intermediate authority, to assist in relaxing the legal difficulties in the purchase of land, to supply a channel through which arrangements might be made for the transfer of this property, to suggest the mode by which this might be effected—giving in future a title that should not be liable to question—seeking after mature consideration the aid of parliament for the confirmation of that title, in some way or other limiting the amount of charge on account of the past, to which the lands should be subjected; thus giving security to the tenant, and also giving equal security to the purchaser against legal disturbance on account of flaws in the title? He would, for one, see with great satisfaction the government possessed, with the intention of re-distributing it, of that great estate which was now on sale in Connemara.\* At present what was the state of things? Here was one union obliged to support 4,500 able-bodied paupers, and that would continue for a time. The result would be, these able-bodied men would come to interfere with the labour of this country, while the women and children would be left on the land, demanding relief from the poor-rates. As the land was situated, it was highly improbable that any one, without the intervention of a third party, would purchase property. There was a magnificent estate, of 200,000 acres, on the west coast of Ireland; if it were transferred to another proprietor, he might improve the country, open up roads, and lay the foundations of future prosperity in the district. Even an intelligent commissioner having all this labour to dispose of, might employ it in the same way. But, though that estate contained valleys as fertile as any in the country, no one would be foolish enough to advance £50,000 upon it, with its present incumbrance of £150,000, and the existing uncer-

\* The extensive estate of the late Mr. Martin of Galway.

tainty about the rates. But were an intelligent commissioner appointed, who might take possession of the property for a time, divide it, and open up means of communication—security being given for ten or fourteen years that a certain amount of poor rate should not be exceeded—then that class of men would be called into action who bought the land in the time of James I., and the foundation of future prosperity would thus be laid; care being taken, above all, to avoid the establishment of any religious distinction. He would not attempt to remove any proprietor on account of his religion, but would attempt to infuse new blood and new enterprise into the country. He would have division of the property, security of title, and would give a stimulus to industry by giving a guaranty to the future proprietor against being suddenly overwhelmed by the amount of poor-rates. No measure short of that was likely to be successful. He greatly doubted whether, by the bill of the session of 1848, there would be any transfer of property—whether some intermediate authority would not be required to act between the Court of Chancery and the purchaser. That was the course which James I. had taken, after asking the opinion of the highest authorities. He went to Lord Bacon, who knew nothing at all about Ireland; but his treatise upon the ‘Plantation of Ireland’ was well worth, on account of his prophetic sagacity, the consideration of the present more enlightened race of men. As might be expected, the ‘Plantation of Ireland’ contained extravagant and misplaced compliments on the sagacity of James. There were also some ridiculous proposals in it, but on the whole its suggestions were wise and sagacious. He says: ‘of all things a commission is most necessary, both to direct and appease controversies and the like.’ That was to say, he would not trust to those particular guardians, to the vice-guardians appointed in particular parishes, who no doubt were willing



to do all they could, but still were without any influence. He goes on to say, 'the commissioners should for a certain time reside in some habitable town in Ireland, near the county where the Plantation shall be.' Then he puts the answer that he knew would be made by ministers and secretaries of state. 'What need is there of this expense? Hath not your Majesty a most excellent privy council in Ireland?' Having been in office, he knew that this would be the answer. But he says, 'When I speak of a council of Plantation, I speak of some persons chosen by way of reference, for though there be a grave and sufficient council in Ireland, yet that supplieth not the purpose whereof I speak. It will give greater expedition and some better perfection in the direction of the matters to be considered beforehand, if such considerations be left with those who have continual care of the cause.' That is to say, he would advise, in order to avert the danger that was gradually advancing, and to meet the imminent present crisis, the selection of persons by the crown, as the best means of effecting a transfer of property consistently with equity and justice.

"He heard great objections to the rate in aid, and a great many were willing to come forward with other means to supply it. Those other means would be more effectual after he had got the rate in aid. He was willing not to exempt personal property, and if the representatives of Ireland considered it would be just, and should desire to put a tax on personal property as well as on land, he should be willing to agree to that, after he had got the rate in aid. When he got that, he should then be disposed to listen favourably to the proposition which was made by one whose suggestions were entitled to the utmost respect, from his personal character, his knowledge of Ireland, and his attachment to her best interests—he alluded to the honourable member for Limerick (Mr. Monsell). Nay, he was not sure that he

would not consent that the proceeds of that property tax should be applied to the relieving them from their present most painful condition—that was to say, if he had a property tax now enacted, he hoped it would be sufficient to afford them a prospect of extricating themselves from their present difficulties. If he had a property tax now levied on Ireland on the principle of the English property tax, but varying in the details according to the different circumstances of the country, he, for one, would not object to apply the proceeds to the extrication of Ireland from her present difficulties, considering the peculiarity of the misfortune by which she was overtaken. He thought that this would be a most useful appropriation of the money. He looked to the west of Ireland with perfect despair. He cared not whether they would be able this year or the next to raise £300,000 or £400,000; for he was deeply convinced, unless more vigorous efforts were made to rescue that country from the calamities she was now suffering, and the evils that impended over her, that at the expiration of those two years the state of things would be worse. The habits of self-dependence on the part of the poor would be gone—there would be hopelessness and despair on the part of the gentry. The land would continue uncultivated till it was perfectly unsaleable, and the ruin would spread unless some vigorous effort was made to change the constitution of the tenure of property, and to have the land improved. If they adopted the means which he pointed out, the west of Ireland would afford an opportunity for improvement, which, speaking practically, no other quarter of the world presented. On the other side of the Atlantic there were large states rising up in every direction; and with the communications on land by railroads, and on water by steam, completed, there was every reason why the west of Ireland—if the possession in respect to the tenure of land could be improved—should be a most prosperous and

thriving district. He recollected some lines of a ballad written at the time of the unfortunate rebellion of 1798, when men of talent directed their ability and efforts to spread disaffection and treason, to this effect :—

When Erin first rose from the dark heaving flood,  
God bless'd the Green Island, and saw it was good—  
In sun, and in soil, and in station thrice blest,  
With her back tow'ards Britain, her face to the west.

“ Her face was still towards the west, but there was now an opportunity of conciliating her affections and binding her attachment to Britain. It appeared to him, therefore, that they had now an opportunity, by a new constitution of property—by applying, with the aid of government, new capital to the cultivation of the soil in Ireland—of materially improving the condition of that country, and if they should succeed in extricating her from her present state of calamity and affliction, the means of securing, not alone her future prosperity, but happiness for herself, and strength to this united empire.”

This speech came like a ray of unexpected light upon a drear and benighted waste ; it produced, as it could not fail to do, a great sensation both in the House and throughout the country. Lord John Russell treated the proposition with respect, but hesitated to give a decided opinion until a future opportunity. Meantime the journals, both in Ireland and England, were almost unanimous in their admiration and approval of the scheme propounded by the ex-premier.

Upon the occasion of a subsequent stage of the bill, Sir Robert Peel gave some further revelations of the scope and details of his “confiscation plan,”—as it was foolishly and unjustly called by some of its opponents,—in a speech which occupied two hours and a half in the delivery. Following Mr. Napier, who spoke against the rate in aid, he said :—

“ Sir. in the course of the able and temperate speech

which the honourable and learned gentleman has just made—a speech on which the best eulogium I can offer is, that it is worthy of the honourable gentleman's own high character and eminent ability—the honour has been done me by the honourable and learned gentleman, of referring to my opinions on the subject of Ireland; and as I wish to take this opportunity of making some observations rather having reference to the social condition of Ireland, than to the immediate measure which is the subject of consideration, I think the present is the moment at which the observations I have to offer can most properly be addressed to the House. I voted for the propositions submitted by the noble lord at the head of her Majesty's government, rather for the purpose of expressing my opinion, that we had a fair claim to call upon Ireland to make an exertion for herself, than for that of expressing any opinion on the question of a rate in aid. I still continue to think, notwithstanding the able speech of the honourable and learned member, that we do possess that claim on the self-exertion of Ireland. I think we have that claim because of the noble and generous effort which we made for the relief of the people of Ireland during their hour of distress, in that period of famine which overtook the land. I think, also, we have that claim partly because Ireland has not done her duty, by repaying to the imperial treasury those moneys which were advanced to her upon the assurance that they would be repaid. The honourable and learned gentleman says, the people of Ireland have paid all they were asked to pay. It is because I differ from him upon that point, that I consider we are not justified in imposing upon the people of Ireland a special rate for the relief of their own poor. We asked Ireland to repay to the imperial treasury the sum of £1,300,000, which was advanced by the imperial treasury, for the purpose of building the union workhouses



of that country. We made the same advance for the purpose of building the union workhouses in England, but I have not yet heard that the repayment of this advance has been refused, whereas Ireland has repudiated the debt, and this, I must confess, I did very sincerely regret. I do not, therefore, think that the honourable member's answer upon this point is either a clear or a satisfactory one. On the contrary, I do think that a pecuniary obligation towards the imperial treasury rests upon Ireland; and I regret that it has not been discharged, because the suspicion and distrust of England have been excited, and, I must add, not without reason. I also voted for the proposition of the noble lord, because I thought that if Ireland did make a separate exertion, she would thereby induce England to co-operate with her in applying remedial measures to her present lamentable condition.

“I confess, sir, that I did not regard this rate in aid as a remedy—and I think you will commit a great mistake if you regard the £50,000 grant, or this rate of £100,000, or any other rate, as measures commensurate with the requirements of Ireland. At the same time I must say, that I concur in much that has been said by the honourable and learned gentleman, and in no respect more so, than when he says that injustice has been done to Ireland in regard to the operation of the poor law. I must express my opinion that Ireland has exerted herself in meeting the burden imposed upon her by the poor law. I think England ought to bear in mind that this was an entirely new and an unexpected incumbrance fixed upon the land of Ireland in 1838. I think it ought to be remembered that all landed property was inherited in Ireland, prior to 1838, quite free from the charge of poor rates; and that when estates in that country were encumbered, they were subjected to this additional and unexpected burden. I think it ought to be remembered

that during a period of unparalleled calamity, in the midst of a famine of the most awful character, Ireland sustained a burden of £1,600,000 for the maintenance of the poor. I think that was an unheard-of exertion on the part of Ireland. I heard some honourable member say, during a former night's debate upon this question, 'Why should we support your poor in Ireland, after you have rebelled against us?' Now, I believe that to be an unfounded charge against the people of Ireland. The people of Ireland did not rebel. You were enabled without the loss of a single life to suppress the outbreak last year, because Ireland did not rebel. Through all their sufferings, amidst all their calamities, the Irish people remained true to their allegiance; and I remind you of these facts in order to propitiate the English nation towards that unfortunate people. I speak, sir, at this moment, under an overwhelming sense of the magnitude of the crisis which is now impending. My appeal to the more favoured portions of this empire is not based merely on the natural feelings of sympathy which the miseries of our fellow-subjects and citizens must excite in our hearts. I believe those sympathies would prevail, were the case of Ireland to be well and thoroughly understood. But my appeal rests on the far stronger ground, that your own interests are most deeply implicated in the discovery of a remedy for her present horrible condition.

"With the permission of the House I will briefly recapitulate the circumstances in which we now stand with respect to Ireland. In the session of 1847-8 we found it necessary to commence the public business by consenting to the Irish Arms act, and we concluded that session by passing the Habeas Corpus Suspension act. I gave my cordial support to the government on both these measures, because I believed them to be founded on stern necessity. All the evils under which Ireland laboured, would have been aggra-

vated, had those bills not been passed. I refer to them now, not for the purpose of censuring the government which brought them forward, but merely to remind the House of the unhappy condition of Ireland. It is in vain that England will endeavour, by affecting an indifference to the state of Ireland, to escape sharing the burden imposed on her by that country. The difficulty will be solved by England being reduced to the same level as Ireland. At the present moment there are not less than 30,000 regular troops in that country. The last accounts, indeed, state the number at 32,000. In addition to these troops, there are 5,400 pensioners, and from 13,000 to 14,000 men in the constabulary force, the expense of all of which is borne, not by Ireland, but by the imperial treasury. The whole number of men so charged on the imperial treasury, is 47,000; and you must bear in mind, that whatever reduction you may effect in this force by improving the social condition of Ireland, is a pecuniary gain to the country at large. Now, with that force existing in Ireland, for the express purpose of preserving order—what, let me ask you, is the social condition of that country? I presume that the statement which I find in this paper is a correct one, and I here see it recorded that at the last Clonmel assizes, which are held for one division of the county of Tipperary, there were 279 persons in the calendar for trial; and that whilst the prison there only contains 223 cells, there were actually confined in it 668 persons, of whom 20 were under sentence of transportation. The newspaper from which I have taken this statement adds, and I think with great justice, that ‘there can be no wonder at Judge Jackson calling this an awful calendar.’ I cannot, therefore, abstain from recommending, and even pressing on the consideration of the House, the social condition of Ireland; and I do this in that spirit of conciliation which the honourable and learned member (Mr. Napier) so ably

enjoined. The parts of Ireland where the greatest distress exists, and where the unions are not able to support themselves, but require extrinsic aid, are chiefly confined to Munster and Connaught; to them I add the county of Donegal, because it is assimilated in point of condition to those provinces. I find by the last population census, that the population of Munster in 1841 was 2,396,000, the population of Connaught in that year was 1,418,000, and of the county of Donegal 400,000, making a total population in a district which may be defined by drawing a line from the bay of Donegal to Waterford, of 4,000,000.

“In adverting to the condition of Ireland, I shall take a period antecedent to the failure of the food which has happened during the last four years. I will revert to a period when Ireland was in full possession of protective duties, the repeal of which, according to the honourable and learned member (Mr. Napier) aggravated the miseries which Ireland has endured. Now, whilst the protective duties were still in full force in Ireland, what, let me ask you, was the condition of the labourer, and what was the state of the landed proprietary there? Let me refer you upon these points to witnesses of the most undoubted description—namely, those who constituted Lord Devon’s commission, and whose report is dated Feb. 1, 1845. Now, it must be remembered that these are not my own observations or statements. I am about to place before you the testimony of Englishmen of unquestionable veracity, who were fully conversant with the social condition of Ireland, and I take leave to observe, that the names on Lord Devon’s commission included Mr. Redington, Sir Robert Ferguson, and other highly informed members of this House. The following is the statement which I find in their report:—

“‘They regretted to be obliged to add, that, though agricultural improvements were rapidly advancing, yet in most



parts of Ireland there was not a corresponding advance in the condition of agricultural labourers—that they continued to suffer the greatest privations, that they were badly housed, badly fed, badly clothed, and badly paid.’

“In the second volume of the same useful digest there is reference made to a curious document prepared by those who made out the census for the year 1845. Those persons state that they divided the houses of Ireland into four different classes, and that the lowest or fourth class was merely a mud cabin with one room. They then ascertained what proportion of the inhabited houses of Ireland consisted of that fourth class; and here the House must observe that this could have reference to no date posterior to 1844, because the report was signed the 1st February, 1845. It may be assumed that these fourth-class houses are generally unfit for human habitation, and yet it would appear that in the best circumstanced county in this respect—the county of Down—24 7-10ths per cent., or about a fourth of the whole population, live in houses of that class; while in the worst circumstanced districts the proportion is 66 7-10ths per cent., or two-thirds of the whole population. In the rural districts about 43 per cent., and in the urban districts about 36 per cent. of the population, inhabit houses of the fourth class. I should wish more particularly to speak of those districts where the greatest distress prevails—those districts which are mainly depending on you for support. In Donegal I find that the number of the population inhabiting these fourth-class houses is 47 per cent.; in Leitrim, 47; in Roscommon, 47; in Sligo, 50; in Galway, 52; in Limerick, 55; in Cork, 56; in Clare, 56; in Mayo, 62; and in Kerry, 66. Such was the state of affairs before Ireland was visited with that dreadful calamity, the first appearance of which was in the autumn of 1846.

“Now what was the condition of Ireland with regard

to landed property, and the tenure of landed property? There was laid before this House, a short time since, an abstract of the number of estates in Ireland under the management of the Courts of Chancery and Exchequer. I will not, in the first instance, refer to the years 1845, 1846, or 1847; but again purposely go back to a year in which there were heavy duties upon the importation of foreign corn—to a year when Ireland enjoyed whatever advantage was to be gained from protection to agriculture. What was the condition, then, of landed property in the year 1844? In the case of the Court of Chancery, I find that the number of estates under its management in that year was 874. The yearly rental of those estates was £748,000. The arrears of the receivers, when first appointed, were £34,500 on the whole of those estates. But the arrears, when the last account was made up in 1844, had increased to no less a sum than £380,000. The costs paid by the receivers amounted to £17,340; and out of the yearly rental of £748,000, what do you think was the sum expended in improvements on the estates? Out of a rental of £748,000 a year, the sum expended in improvements was £2,563. With regard to the Court of Exchequer, I am obliged to take the years 1844, 1845, 1846, 1847, and 1848, collectively, because the return does not give them separately. And what do I find? I find that, during those five years, there were under the management of the Court of Exchequer 448 estates. The yearly rental was £155,400. The arrears of the receivers, when they were first appointed, were £61,700, which had increased, at the time of the last account, to £171,800. The costs paid by the receivers were £38,000. The amount expended in improvements was absolutely nothing. Now, what is the condition of estates managed by the Courts of Chancery and Exchequer? Do you know what it means?

I had the—I will not say good fortune—but the misfortune to hear an account of what this was from a most intelligent gentleman—a member of this House—Mr. Guinness. He certainly spoke from the highest authorities, for he was himself a receiver under the Court of Chancery, and he certainly could not be influenced by any partiality to give testimony unduly unfavourable towards the system. Mr. Guinness said that he was the receiver for three estates. Of one, in the county of Tipperary, the rental exceeded £2,000 a year. It had been under his care for 21 years, and in the course of the whole of that time not 1s. had been expended to improve the condition of that estate. He was agent, too, for an estate in Mayo, the rent of which was £4,500. That estate had been nine years under his management, and £168 was all that had been expended on its improvement. He was agent also for an estate in Westmeath, of which the rental was £10,600. That estate had been ten years under his management, and the sum expended in improvements did not amount to £600 during the whole period. He had received from that estate more than £100,000, whilst £600 only had been employed towards its improvement. But even the expenditure of that £600 had not been incurred without considerable advantage to accrue from it. There had been nothing expended until within the last three years, when £200 a year had been laid out, and that paltry outlay of £200 a year, for three years, had enabled him to recover the sum of £2,600 of old arrears. The first year he received £600 of old arrears, and the two succeeding years £1,000 each. I refer to this state of things previous to the year 1844, for the purpose of suggesting this inquiry—whether or not such a condition of landed property can be of any benefit either to the owner, the incumbrancer, or the country?

“ Ireland, then, being thus circumstanced with regard to

the great mass of her population, and with regard to the tenure of landed property, there supervened, I believe, the greatest calamity which almost ever occurred in the history of mankind. There were four years of the successive failure of that species of subsistence on which the great mass of the population existed. Four successive years! Now, what influence had that great calamity upon the condition of the people? This, I think, is a most faithful account of the condition in which the first year of the famine found the people of Ireland, and more especially of the south and west. In the best of times their existence was wretched, and when the famine came—when the only root they had been accustomed to look to for food became a mass of rottenness—with no employment, no manufactures, they were left without sustenance, and without resource, fit objects for the aid provided for them from the bounty of the empire, the charity of the benevolent, and the law now in force for the relief of the poor. That was the condition of the poor of Ireland, who lived in villages, when they were overtaken by that dreadful calamity. But there was another class, called, I suppose, a little higher in the social scale, who had small holdings of two, three, or more acres of land;—their tillage was of the rudest description—green crops were unknown—first, potatoes—then oats—potatoes again—then oats, or perhaps barley—often two or three grain-crops in succession. Some of the potatoes which did not decay in 1847 were sought for with extraordinary avidity, in the hope that they would grow again in 1848. They made a last effort to purchase seed. The cow and every available article were sold. Many staked their all upon that root, and lost it. The blast came, and more withering ruin than before. That I believe to be a faithful and true account of the condition of the



peasantry in many parts of Ireland at the period of which I am now speaking. They staked their all on the cultivation of the potato. They lost; and ruin more withering than before has followed. Now, what has been the influence of the successive failure of the potato crop, combined with the operation of the poor-law, upon landed property? All the incumbrances existing in 1844 have been aggravated by the inability to meet former liabilities, and to pay the arrears of the poor-rate; and by just so much is the condition of landed property worse now than it was in 1844. Now, what is the present condition of a great part of Ireland? I take the 21 worst unions. There are 21 unions in Ireland comprising an immense district of country, and a very great population, of which this is the financial state:—In 18 of these unions you have been compelled—reasonably, no doubt—to supersede the local exertions of the gentry, and their affairs are now administered by vice-guardians, who are discharging their duties, as it appears to me, most zealously and faithfully. In those unions the expenditure for the year ending the 29th of September, 1848, was £468,000. The net amount of debt on that day not provided for was £123,900; there being, therefore, for that year, including the annual expenditure, an outstanding debt to provide for of £592,000, for the relief of the poor. How was that expenditure to be met? It was impossible for them to meet it by their own unaided efforts. You were obliged to meet it. You did: and, as I think, wisely; for whatever objections there may be to the principle of adopting such a course, yet, rather than suffer any portion of the Queen's subjects to starve, you preferred to meet it partly by private benevolence, and then, when that was exhausted, by funds from the public treasury. Well, the rate collected to meet the expenditure, or rather the demand, of £592,000,

was only £199,000. The differences supplied by the British Association and the Treasury was £256,800. The funds of the British Association are, I apprehend, expended. You have no longer that source, therefore, to rely on; so that, if there must be extraneous aid, the Treasury is the only source from which it can be derived. That was the general condition of those 21 unions. I will now refer, with the permission of the House, to the state of one or two of them. This I find to be the condition of Castlebar union. There is a population of 61,000 persons. The maximum who received relief in 1847 was 46,000. Successive years of famine have told fearfully on the circumstances of all classes. Among the highest rated—the immediate lessors—there are no less than nine (proprietary) whose estates are under the supervision of the Court of Chancery, and managed by the receiver. The incumbrances of former years, accumulating upon present disasters, appear to render extrication hopeless. The Clifden union presents this extraordinary fact, that out of a net annual value of £19,986, there has been land thrown up to the amount of £11,121, or nearly three-fifths of the whole net value; in consequence, I presume, of the inability of the persons so throwing up their land to meet the demands already made upon them, and their unwillingness to incur further responsibilities. I have now before me the copy of a memorial recently presented to the government from the grand jury of the county of Cork. They say they should not conceal from the government their conviction that that county was not able to pay the arrears of advances—that that inability is attended by the fact, that there are in that county thousands of acres of land thrown out of cultivation and wholly waste at this moment—that two of their baronial rate-collectors threw up their appointments

at the last assize—that one barony alone, extending over 80,000 acres, had been without a collector from that time to this, and that it was impossible to get a collector, the entire barony being alleged to be waste.

“ Now, what are our prospects? Observe now what is the altered condition of insolvent landed property with reference to solvent property since the passing of the poor-law. Previous to the poor-law, each property, whether solvent or insolvent, stood alone. The neglect of tenants, inability to pay rent, general mismanagement, and so forth, of insolvent estates, did not visit immediately the solvent estates in their neighbourhood. It did no doubt eventually, but no direct peculiar burden immediately ensued. Now, however, under the poor-law, what is the condition of solvent estates? Why, they become responsible, as far as the purposes of the poor-law are concerned, for the insolvent. Now, I am speaking to Englishmen. I am mentioning details with which Irish gentlemen are perfectly familiar, and let me ask those who belong to our common country, what are we to do or to expect with regard to Ireland? What are the facts? Is it true, that, in Cork, they are unable to obtain a collector for a barony of 80,000 acres, because the whole of it is waste? Is it true, that out of a net annual value of £20,000 in one union, land to the amount of £11,121 has been thrown up? Is it true, that in another union, the estates of nine of the chief proprietors are subject to the management of the Court of Chancery, of which I have given you a specimen? If it be true, let us calmly ask ourselves what is to be the result. And observe, that the effects of this insolvency must go on extending until the solvent and the insolvent shall be merged in one common ruin. But what is the position of the poor? Every acre of land that is thrown out of cultivation aggra-

vates the evil. What is the position of that barony of 80,000 acres now waste? What is the condition of the poor on it? Now, don't let us fancy that there is hope in a good potato harvest. You may have a plentiful potato harvest in 1849. If you have, there will be a false reliance placed upon it. The end of the spring of 1850 will exhibit the most determined effort to perpetuate the cultivation of the potato. Every expense will be saved, to enable the people to collect seed and to provide for subsistence during 1849, and you may go on for a time; but after the warning we have had for the last four successive years, can we feel any assurance that this would prove even a temporary relief? My belief is, that it will only perpetuate a vicious system—that whilst it will diminish the demand on the treasury for a time perhaps, nothing but evil will be the ultimate result of a prosperous potato harvest in 1849.

“The real truth is, that we are now deliberating and acting in one of the most extraordinary crises in the history of this country. It is necessary for us to understand this question thoroughly. Unless we are resolved to have recourse again to that vicious practice of relying upon the potato as a means of subsistence, can the wit of man devise any other remedy than the gradual introduction of cereal crops in substitution of that root? You are now feeding probably 100,000 destitute persons in Ireland. You are enabled to do it because you had the wisdom to remove every impediment which previously existed in the way of the introduction of foreign corn. If that law, of which I felt it my duty to propose the repeal, were now in existence, there would have been a duty, I believe, of about 10s. a quarter upon the introduction of Indian meal. It is that Indian meal, as a substitute for the potato, which now enables you to keep body and soul together—for you do nothing more—amongst those miserable people, at an expense to



the imperial treasury of not quite 1d. a day for each person. Now, this is the problem you have to solve. By what means will you provide for the substitution of a higher and more certain description of food in the place of that potato which has hitherto been relied on to so little purpose? I believe that few will take the chance of the potato again. If you do not, what course will you pursue between the interval that must elapse before a cereal substitute can be provided? It will be a long interval. Again, an acre of land which, applied to potatoes, will support a certain number of persons—applied to wheat, will not support half that number. Great care will be required in the cultivation. Drainage will be necessary. The lands are exhausted by the potato, and are unfit for the substitution of cereal crops. If you are then to substitute cereal cropping, I say that no person in Ireland, holding a farm of five acres of land, can support his family upon it. I know one single estate where there are 180 tenants occupying farms of not more than five acres in extent. Hitherto the system has worked remarkably well. They grew corn enough to pay the rent and lived upon the potatoes. They cannot do this any more. If you encourage them to grow corn instead of the potato, they will not be able to support their families. Those 180 farmers must either abandon their land, or cease to pay rent; or many, I apprehend, saving their capital, will proceed to the United States.

“Now, under these circumstances, is there any alternative for Great Britain to adopt—has she any alternative so far as her own interests are concerned? If Ireland should come forward, as I trust she will, in the spirit of the amendment of the honourable gentleman—if she should come forward, and bear her share of the burden—if she will make great exertions to pay the just debt which she owes us on account of union workhouses—such an exhi-

bition will make England more ready to co-operate with her in some decisive measure having for its object the cultivation of cereal crops. And this is really the main point—it is not the question of the £200,000 or £300,000 ; but I want to see Ireland taking a step in her own behalf which shall propitiate the good feeling of this country. Now, what course shall we pursue? I am sure, if I offer any suggestion, the last thing to enter my mind will be any wish to embarrass the government. But I think something must be done. Some course must be adopted for the purpose of keeping the people alive. I assure the honourable gentleman that he misunderstood me, if he thought I said that the mere substitution of one proprietary for another would at once solve the difficulty. I feel as much convinced as any man, that no single measure will be sufficient to relieve Ireland from her difficulties. It appears to me, that there would be an advantage in taking some immediate steps with regard to the superintendence and management of those districts of Ireland which are the most distressed. As I said before, you have not the advantage of local management. You are not inviting local functionaries to undertake the duties of management. Eighteen unions are already governed by vice-guardians. I suggested the other night the appointment of a commission for the management of those unions. Subsequent reflection has induced me to think that that is the best course you can pursue. I would also attempt to bring the affairs of those unions under one control and superintendence. I would have a commission appointed by the government, having the confidence of the government, composed of men on whom they can rely, deriving their authority from the government (*no imperium in imperio*)—whose duty should be, without delay, to apply themselves to the management and improvement of those

unions. I would propose that the commission should discharge its duties on the spot. I believe there would be the greatest advantage if you could, as I have no doubt you could, prevail on men of the highest character, in the management of landed property in England, politically connected with you, in whom the country has confidence, to devote themselves to the consideration of this question. If they saw with their own eyes—if they entered into a personal conference, and would judge for themselves—not through the intervention of their agents—they would be enabled to suggest to you a measure well deserving of your consideration. I would advise you to place under the charge of the commission all the various measures that have been suggested for the mitigation of this calamity. I would try to act on some concerted scheme. You have grants for the fisheries, grants for the improvement of the land for public works; it appears to me that the application of these grants in these distressed unions should be made on some system; that there should be concert with the vice-guardians. I do not propose that you should supersede the board of works, but that grants should be made with a view to one object, to lay the foundation of a better scheme. The honourable and learned gentleman was wrong in supposing that all we contemplated in 1846 was the import of corn; we proposed, and her Majesty's present government most willingly passed into a law in 1846, a bill to authorize the advance of public money to a limited amount, to promote the improvement of land by public works. It appears to me, that those superintendents to whom I have referred, should also take into consideration the policy of diminishing the pressure by the means of emigration. We have the greatest colonial empire on the face of the earth. In several of those colonies there is a great demand for labour; in Ireland there is an excess

and superfluity of labour, counteracting all your exertions. It does seem possible, that by some combined measures, you might mitigate the evil by introducing a good system of emigration. I place less confidence in the efficacy of this than many do. I am quite aware of the enormous expense. I am quite aware of the necessity of great caution in the application; but there is one answer constantly made, which is thought conclusive, which I don't think is entitled to all the weight attributed to it. It is said; do not interfere, on the part of the state, in promoting emigration, because there is a vast amount of voluntary emigration going on. I should be unwilling to interfere with voluntary emigration conducted at the expense of the proprietors who feel an interest in relieving themselves; at the same time, before we admit the argument of voluntary emigration to be conclusive, let us inquire of whom the emigrants consist. Many are men who are taking capital; many are men suffering under the apprehension of approaching poor rates; and every man you lose from Ireland who takes away more capital than the number that capital would employ, is a dead loss. The comfortable farmer, possessing some £40 or £50 capital, who sells the tenant-right of his holding in the north of Ireland, and transfers his capital to the United States and Canada, confers no benefit whatever on Ireland by emigration, but withdraws the capital which might be usefully employed. There is another class of voluntary emigrants in whose expatriation we have no cause to rejoice; they are the class of helpless paupers who go off because they are afraid of positive starvation, and inflict positive evil on the colony. I believe you have, in many respects, remedied many of the great evils which attended emigration. I believe that there have been useful precautions adopted in respect to emigration; but I must say, that I never heard a more painful account



of this voluntary emigration than that which I find in a letter of so recent a date as the 30th of November, 1847, which bears the signature of Mr. Devere, and which has been adopted as an official document by the Colonial-office. This is the account which Mr. Devere gives of the voluntary emigration to which I have referred, of the completely destitute; and no record of suffering on board a slave-ship has anything approaching to this:—

“ Mr. Devere says he ‘took his passage in the steerage of the ship, that he might be a judge of the condition of the emigrant. For nearly two months before the emigrant has been at sea, he is an altered man. How can it be otherwise? Hundreds of poor people, men, women, and children, of all ages, from the drivelling idiot of 90 to the babe just born; almost without life, without air, weltering in filth, breathing a fetid atmosphere; sick and fevered patients, lying in sleeping-places so narrow as to deny them the power of indulging in the natural restlessness of disease; disturbing those around them, and predisposing to contagion; living without food or medicine, except as administered by the hand of casual charity; dying without spiritual consolation, buried without the rites of the church; fed on insufficient food, with supplies of water hardly enough for cooking and drinking, and which did not allow washing. In many ships, filthy beds teeming with all abomination, never required to be brought on deck; a narrow place between the sleeping-places, and the piles of boxes never washed; a fetid stench, until the day before the arrival at quarantine, when all hands were required to put on a fair face for the government inspector; the voice of prayer is never heard; drunkenness is not discouraged, because it is profitable to the captain, who traffics in grog.’

“ Such emigration is a positive disgrace to this country,

with its great colonial empire. These people do the greatest disservice, on their arrival in the colony or in the United States; they cause a repugnance to emigration conducted on such a system; they induce the countries, to which these people go, to throw impediments in the way of emigration, and they prevent that sound and healthy emigration which might take place, if conducted on good principles. Not entertaining too confident an expectation of the advantages of emigration, still I cannot but think it likely that a superintending authority, acting in concert with the Colonial-office, being on the spot, able to communicate with the proprietors of estates, seeing in what part of the country there is a congestion of population, might greatly facilitate voluntary emigration. There is a great evil in the want of full information. Conceive a man seeking a new abode in the United States, 2,000 or 3,000 miles from home—what a comfort to have ready access to a man who could give him information! I think it would be politic to incur some expense for the purpose of facilitating emigration under certain conditions. You tell us what has been done by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and by others; that they have reduced the amount of poor-rates on their estates by the emigration of the superfluous hands; that they have increased the demand for labour, and restored prosperity and contentment on their estates, and that those who had emigrated were remitting sums to Ireland to encourage emigration. Lord Palmerston may have been able to effect this. As I said before, I think the exertions made by him to relieve the district from the misery with which it has been visited, do him very great credit; but how many gentlemen may be in Ireland willing to make the same exertions, if they had your assistance and advice! You might go on increasing this fund of emigration—by emigration wisely con-

ducted, you might encourage further remittances from emigrants in the United States. I say, therefore, that in addition to public works, in addition to fisheries, in addition to encouragement by draining, all of which, I think, might be attained by this commission of which I speak, I think the condition of the country, and the means of improving it by emigration, should be amongst the first subjects that should occupy attention. I come to another point, to which I adverted the other night, and to which I still attach the greatest importance. In my opinion, all these measures will be ineffectual, unless you can cure, in some way or other, those monstrous evils which arise from the condition of landed property to which I have referred. If there are estates producing £800,000 a year, with arrears annually accumulating, with not more than £2,000 of the whole rental applied to the permanent improvement of the estates; and if there are certain principles entertained by the Court of Chancery, which oppose an insuperable bar to any improvement in that respect;—then it is my firm belief, that it would be of inestimable advantage to every solvent estate—of great advantage to the nominal owner, the incumbrancer—of advantage to everybody except the receiver of the Court of Chancery and the lawyers, who are dividing the profits—that, consistently with right dealing towards the proprietors of the property, you should relieve these estates, and permit them to be cultivated by men with capital, free from incumbrances, with new hopes and new vigour. In my opinion, you would do more by that act for the advancement of Ireland, than by any other that you could at present suggest.

“I will just contrast with the hopeless condition of some parts of Ireland on account of the extent of these incumbrances—I will read to the House a letter of a very humble man, relating what he had done in Ireland, although having

no connexion in that country, and undertaking a settlement in a remote part of Ireland, but bringing capital enough for the cultivation of the lands. It is on a small scale, but if you will devise measures which will enable a man usefully and securely to follow this man's example, you may judge of what may be done. This is a letter from a Lancashire man, who gives an account of an undertaking to which he had been a party, on the west coast of Ireland. He says: 'I had taken in perpetuity, a lease on the west coast of Ireland.' He had planted four of his sons there. To encourage habits of industry, one was buying all the stock brought to him, to send to England. Another purchased a vessel of 25 tons, and endeavoured to encourage fishing on the coast; another was employing last year upwards of 100 labourers, but on account of being heavily taxed for his improvements, he had turned them off. From that party I send you a letter which was never intended to be seen. It is dated the 16th of March. This is the account which the son gives of his proceedings in this country, which we suppose to be so wild and savage. 'The more I see, the more I am convinced that this country has the best prospects of any place I know of. There is every desideratum for the enjoyment of a contented and prosperous life. I see no reason why any persons should not support themselves entirely on the produce of their lands here. Of beef, mutton, and pork, an almost inexhaustible supply can always be had. Flour, oatmeal, &c., should come off the farm: a chandler's shop should never be known—in fact, groceries, and something for clothing, should be the only expenditure of a person in this country. For the yearly sum of £5, enough fuel may be obtained, to superfluity; and as to vegetables, any plant coming under that denomination will flourish here with ordinary care.'

"Which is the best means of encouraging the improvement of estates—exertions like these, or estates left to the



management of the Court of Chancery ? I mentioned before, the management of property, to a certain extent, by the commission of which I speak. No man has less confidence than I have in the economy of such an undertaking. So far from advising this commission to enter upon the employment of unprofitable labour, I think such a commission, if it were appointed, ought to have for the principal end of its appointment, to revert to the principle of 1838, and to make the workhouse the test of destitution. I do not believe there can be any other test. I have not the slightest confidence in a labour rate. I have confidence in encouraging local improvements where there is reproductive labour, but I have not the slightest confidence in making labour the test of destitution ; and I believe if the funds of Great Britain were applied to support the destitute in Ireland, even attaching labour as the condition of relief, you would do the greatest mischief ; that your test could not be effective ; but that there would be such an interference with the ordinary labour market as to involve all in one common destitution ; but seeing the loss as to the substitution of cereal food, I cannot say I should be adverse altogether to such an undertaking as should set an example of improved cultivation."

The right honourable baronet proceeded at considerable length to argue upon the unfitness of the Court of Chancery in Ireland to act with the requisite promptitude for the sale of encumbered estates ; and contended that the mechanism of the bill introduced and carried by the government in the year 1848, was too cumbrous to carry out the intention of its framers. He cited the opinions of the Irish Lord Chancellor, and also of Lord Langdale and Lord Campbell, in support of his views : and especially those of Lord Langdale, the Master of the Rolls. He then continued :

"The time is fast coming when we must know whether legal obligations upon estates shall be fulfilled or not. If

the poor-rate be in arrear on an estate, I do not see why the estate should not pay the arrear ; and if it be not paid, why a portion of the estate should not be sold for its liquidation. Now, do that. Enable the commissioners to sell such portion as shall be sufficient to pay off the arrear of the poor-rate, and then enable the commissioners to give to the purchaser a title against all the world, the latter having nothing to do with the application of the money, and the Court of Chancery applying the surplus to the benefit of reversionary interests and incumbrancers, and then you will have the means of at once releasing a certain quantity of land in Ireland, and of inviting new capital for its cultivation. But let your process be simple and your title perfectly secure. The poor-rate is a prior lien on the land, to any other ; there is no injustice in it. By the laws you have passed it is the first lien, and consequently you have a perfect right to release a portion of the estate from the incumbrance, and then take the course I recommend. Invite capital and enterprise, invite small proprietors ; don't transfer the estate from one insolvent to another, for then you will be doing no good. But, under these commissions, sell the land at a profit ; do not offer it for sale at once or in large quantities, so as to render it a drug upon the markets, but do it in such a manner as shall attract small proprietors, and enable them to follow with security the example of the young Lancashire man, who cultivates his vegetables, and writes home to his friends that there is no better land anywhere than in the west of Ireland. I think that such an arrangement would lead in many cases to an amicable transfer. I cannot conceive that the owners of incumbered estates, when menaced by the Court of Chancery, would not be placed at a mode which would in a simple manner rid them of their incumbrances ; I cannot doubt but that there would be much of amicable transfer under this process ; and then, if you have

the land, I believe you will find not only individuals, but companies, in this metropolis, disposed to follow the example of the London companies in the reign of James I.—less, perhaps from the hope of gain, than the desire of making character by facilitating the improvement of Ireland—I do believe that such great company would soon be found. Such are my opinions—taking a connected view of the whole subject. The consideration of how we can further serve the country, by drainage, by local improvements, by opening new roads, by facilitating the construction of piers for the accommodation of the fisheries, by promoting, under sound regulations, emigration, (not, however, interfering with voluntary emigrations,) will, of course, form part of the plan; but, above all things, address yourselves to the main question of facilitating the transfer of property from insolvent to solvent proprietors. Direct your whole attention to these points, abandoning the present injurious system of giving gratuitous relief, whether in exchange for labour or not. And reverting gradually, without loss of life—providing for the destitute when provision is inevitable—but reverting gradually to the wiser principle of the act of 1838, re-establishing the national local guardians instead of those now in power, and substituting the only effectual test, the workhouse test, of poverty and destitution. Sir, I can with truth say that I have proposed these suggestions, particularly in so far as refers to the transfer of property, with the utmost hesitation. I am an unprofessional man, but I am deeply sensible of the necessity there is of some means of cutting the gordian knot of legal and technical difficulties. I at once say, that rather than the present state of things should continue, I would at once oust the jurisdiction of the Lord Chancellor. I would appoint a special jurisdiction for the purpose, a thing you have done in a hundred previous instances. I would not permit the perfect title to land to be postponed for five

years; for during that time of uncertainty, who would improve the land? I would meet the difficulty by a novel expedient. Once agreed upon the principle, I would appoint a tribunal of competent men of the highest legal authority, who should decide on cases at once with right of appeal, and I would in some way or other overcome all the difficulties of the Court of Chancery. And with the aid of the gentlemen on the first and second benches, (Messrs. Hamilton and Napier,) who foresaw the difficulties of the act of last year, I would hope to reconcile those difficulties with the strict rules of law and equity. Reject this proposal if you will, but propose some other; and if you can propose a better, there is no man in this House who will give you a more cordial support. I make this proposal without any of the adventitious aids of party. I know not who will support it. I am actuated only by feelings of sympathy for that unfortunate country, and by the conviction that some vigorous effort is necessary, not only for Ireland, but for this country. Let us remember that it is impossible to free ourselves from the connexion with Ireland. Consider what expenses you are incurring on account of the state of her affairs—consider her miserable condition, as shown by the account of the recent Tipperary assizes. Only think in what manner the destitute poor of Ireland affect the condition of your own labouring poor by immigration into this country, a thing which you cannot prevent.

“There may be difficulties in the way of emigration to distant countries, but what must be the consequence of having the sweepings of Ireland continuously poured into Liverpool, and how it must affect the condition of the labouring classes in that locality. If you could direct a useful emigration to other countries, that would be a benefit not only to Ireland, but to England; but the constant inva-



sion of this country by the destitute poor of Ireland will have a gradual tendency to reduce your own labouring population to a similar sad condition. There is one other consideration upon which I wish to touch. Recollect the position of that great portion of the empire to which I refer. Recollect its geographical position. Recollect that while, on the one hand, and rightly managed, it may be a source of strength; yet, on the other, it may be one of great peril and weakness, in the event of any lengthened hostilities against this country. Sir, the great man to whose authority I have already referred, who made the suggestion to James I. respecting the Plantation of Ulster, makes this remark respecting the effects of the Plantation:—‘Thirdly, the consequence is great safety alike to the crown, to your Majesty, and to the state in general, by this act (the Plantation act,) in discomfiting all hostile attempts of foreigners, which the weakness of that kingdom has heretofore invited.’ Now, that was written three hundred years ago, but recollect that the population of these great districts of Munster and Connaught is four millions of men, ninety-five out of every hundred being Roman Catholics — well affected, I believe, and loyal subjects I think they have proved themselves, in spite of recent temptations to rebellion. But still you have no great natural sympathy with them. You have a sympathy with the landed proprietors, but that sympathy is greatly weakened in its effect by the desolation which is now visiting that part of the country, and by the condition of those landed proprietors, in consequence of the operation of the poor-law during four successive years of famine. Bacon, three centuries ago, said that the weakness of that kingdom had theretofore invited the attempts of foreigners. We have had the happiness of being exempted from the dangers which other countries of Europe have recently undergone, or of any apprehension of invasion from

without ; but recollect, that during the last century, since 1759, on three different occasions, the attempts of France have been directed towards that part of the United Kingdom, to the social improvement of which I am attaching so much importance. In 1759 the attempt at invasion of the west coast of Ireland was only defeated by the destruction of the French fleet commanded by Admiral Conflans, by our fleet, under Sir E. Hawke. In 1796 again a great attempt was made by France to invade that part of the country where now the most distressed unions are situated. The attempt on Bantry Bay was only defeated by the weather. In 1798, in another of those distressed unions, Kilala, a landing was effected, and the first town visited by them was Ballina. A small force of 1,100 men maintained a position in Ireland for 17 days, and I think that the town was in the occupation of the French for a considerable time. I revert to these things for the purpose of reminding you that peace may not always continue, that you may have formidable combinations against you, and that Ireland is the weak part of your empire. And if by any decisive efforts you can promote the happiness and welfare of the inhabitants, you are not only promoting her internal peace and advancing her internal prosperity, but, as Lord Bacon said, three hundred years ago, you are taking security that the weakness of that kingdom shall not as heretofore invite the foreign enemy to our shores. The same high authority says ‘that as in the natural body, if there be any member affected, it is enough to draw all malign influences and humours to that part, and to interrupt the health of the whole body ;’ so if malign influences—still to quote that emphatic language—if malign influences, humours, and rheums continue in the social body, they will interrupt not only the health of Ireland, but the health of the whole of the United Kingdom. In the evils which afflict the natural body there may be

means of cure. 'If an unprofitable member offend you; cut it off and cast it from you; if the tree be unfruitful and cumbereth the ground, you may root it up.' But you have no such remedy for evils that affect the social body. You must bear with them; there is no summary remedy. These evils will continue afflicting Ireland, and affecting you deeply at the same time. It is your interest to abate them if possible. I will take hope from the extent of the evil. If nothing of this kind had occurred, we should have pursued the same course. We should never have made up our minds to vigorous exertion to relieve ourselves from the calamity. We should have gone on trusting to the potato, a bad and insufficient food, and every year growing more and more insufficient. But it has pleased God to afflict us with a great calamity, and I do not despair but that you may convert that calamity, grievous as it is, into a means of future improvement and future security. I do entreat of you to consider whether, out of 'this nettle, Danger,' we may not pluck 'this flower, Safety;' and convert this grievous affliction into a means of permanent improvement and a source of future strength."

On a subsequent evening Lord John Russell made a speech, in which he took a review of the propositions which had been made by Sir Robert Peel, and others. With regard to that of the right honourable baronet, he retained still a very guarded position. He doubted whether the assisting of emigration by the state might not have an injurious effect, by deterring individuals from the exertions which they were at present making, and which were considerable, it appearing that remittances to the amount of £500,000 a year were habitually sent over by emigrants to Canada and the United States, to enable friends they had left behind to follow them.\* Though he thought it possible

\* His lordship understated the amount of these remittances. One mercantile firm, in London and Liverpool alone, received within a year remit-

and desirable to make some improvements in the law which encumbered, and in some instances prevented the transfer of property in Ireland, he saw many difficulties in the way of the proposed commission.

The future progress of the Irish question will be detailed hereafter. The Rate in Aid bill, which threatened at one time to pervert the Orangemen of the north of Ireland, into a disaffection almost as great as that of the Repealers of the south and west, was eventually carried,—the second reading in the Commons by 193 to 138; that in the Lords (where the proposal met with strong opposition from many of the peers connected with landed property in Ireland) by 48 to 46, a majority of 2 only.

Immediately after the Rate in Aid bill had passed the Lower House, and before the committee sitting upon the subject had closed their labours, Lord John Russell (April 26) introduced a bill to amend the poor-law in Ireland, in regard to the matter of rating. The object of the measure was to equalize the purposes of the poor-rates in extreme cases, by providing *inter alia*, that when the rates in an electoral division exceeded five shillings in the pound, the other electoral divisions of the union might be called upon to contribute towards the excess, under certain restrictions. Another important feature was the charging of jointures, settlements, and even rent itself, with a portion of the rates.

In the course of the discussion upon this proposition, some remarks were made by Mr. Grattan upon Sir Robert Peel's scheme for the "plantation of Connaught," which called up Sir Robert Peel in reply:—

"Did the right honourable baronet," said Mr. Grattan, "propose to carry out his new plan on the principle of that

tances of £500,000 in sums varying from £2 and £3, to £20 and £30; and other agency houses received as much for the same purposes. The sums were chiefly from Irish emigrants to their Irish kinsfolks.



of king James? What was to be the religion of the new proprietary? The right honourable baronet had not told them that. Having tradueed the landlords, and beaten down the value of the land, they now proposed to take it from them altogether—to drive them out, to Connaught if they liked, or to hell if they deserved it. Did they think the Irish people would submit to be so treated? Did they suppose that by such a course they would ever be able to dispense with the presenee of an army of 40,000 men in Ireland? They talked to the Irish people of the virtue of self-reliance, but they took from them the means of self-reliance.”

Sir Robert Peel, in his spirited answer, not only rebuked Mr. Grattan for his violent language, and vindicated his own proposition, but defended the Irish, or rather the Celtic character, from the imputations which, among a certain portion of the press and of the public, it had become the fashion to cast upon it. “Sir,” said he, “I am sorry that I have heard the speech of the honourable gentleman. I am extremely sorry that it is my misfortune to have been present during the delivery of that speech; but having heard it, I should be still more sorry if I allowed it to pass without rising to make some observations upon it. The honourable gentleman seems to suppose that I made some proposition, in a sectarian spirit, for the purpose of dispossessing the Roman Catholic occupiers, and depriving them of their present holdings, for the purpose of introducing a Protestant population in their stead; I need scarcely assure the House that that was the last intention that could have entered my mind. The very last thing I should propose—the very last idea in my mind would be to substitute for the Roman Catholic population in Ireland, one of a different religion or different race. My hope was to elevate the Roman Catholics and improve their condition, and not to gain some mere political advantage by dispossessing them, and introducing

at their expense, the members of any other creed. When did the honourable member hear from me, that in case there should be a re-distribution of property, the Protestants should have the advantage? Was not I aware that there was much of Roman Catholic capital in Ireland which cannot find vent, in consequence of the uncertain tenure of land? Was I not aware that one of the great evils shown by the Earl of Devon's commission to exist in Ireland was, that capital made in trade and manufactures had no means of developing itself in the improvement of the land—that those who had made fortunes in commerce and in trade had no opportunity of investing those fortunes in the land? And did the honourable gentleman suppose that if facilities were given for so applying this capital, the Roman Catholic merchant of Cork or Waterford would be excluded from making those investments which he cannot make now on account of the barbarous tenure by which the land is held? The honourable gentleman says I wish to drive out the nobility and landed gentry of Ireland—

Mr. Grattan—That was the effect of the plan.

Sir R. Peel—No, sir, I wish to drive out no man. I said distinctly, that I did not propose that there should be any violation of the rights of property in Ireland; but what I wish is this—if there are in some parts of the country, persons who are mere nominal proprietors, who have no real interest in the land—men who derive a small income from it, which is frittered away, not in improving that land, but in law-expenses in Dublin—that if we can obtain facilities for rescuing them from that embarrassing condition, and transferring their estates to other parties who will perform the duties which the possession of land imposes, I am not injuring, but benefiting those landlords, and at the same time conferring a great advantage on the country, by enabling men with new capital, with new hopes, new aspira-

tions, and new feelings with regard to the application of capital, to become the occupiers, to the extent to which they can occupy, consistent with a due regard to the rights of property, of that encumbered and practically vacant soil. Injure the Roman Catholic peasantry of Ireland by the measure I proposed ! Why, did not I hear the right honourable gentleman, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, say the other night, that after four years of successive famine, no less than 15,000 persons in one union were driven from their houses, and thrown upon the world helpless and homeless ? Is that the state of things the honourable gentleman (Mr. Grattan) would wish to retain ? I ask you now, in Algiers, or in the Punjaub, after some successful military operations, or in any part of the civilized or barbarous world, will you show me a country in which 15,000 people have been driven helpless and homeless from their dwellings, and exposed to the inelmeney of the weather ? And this in one union only. I ask, will you show me a parallel to that case in any part of the world ? When I heard that statement, I dwelt upon it in my mind, in the hope that it could not be true, and that some contradiction would be given to it. Let us consider the strength of these people diminished by four successive years of suffering and starvation, and that not in twenty or ten, but in one union, 15,000 human beings were driven out by ejections and legal processes, helpless and homeless, upon the world ; and when in such a state of things I offered suggestions, my main object being to remove from the minds of the people of England, prejudices which might not unnaturally remain after the great expenditure which had taken place—I feared, after the expenditure of some £9,000,000 or £10,000,000 to rescue the people of Ireland from their difficulties, that there might be an unwillingness to contemplate the real magnitude of the subject. My object was to remove that prejudice. I cared

nothing about my plan, or about my suggestion. My object was to impress on the mind of the House of Commons at the time, that notwithstanding our vast expenditure, it was our interest, not only in point of justice, but that it was our interest in point of policy, as well as on pecuniary considerations, to apply ourselves to this condition of Ireland. And, sir, after the fullest reflection, I retain my conviction, that all our other measures—our rates in aid, our alterations in the poor-law, our advances for railways—will all do positively nothing, unless we can remedy that which I believe to be the great social evil of Ireland; the difficulty of effecting the transfer of land to the possession of those who are competent to discharge those duties which the possession of land involves. When I spoke of the settlement of Ulster, I knew perfectly well the construction which would probably be placed on my words. I knew there would be those who would say, ‘you are proposing now in the 19th century, that which might have been tolerated in the 17th.’ I knew that it would be said, What are you to do; do you propose to drive out the Roman Catholics to Connaught or to Hell? To Connaught certainly not; for that is the very district with which it is proposed to deal; and the other place was the last I intended. I said that I was aware that the fatal blot in the plan of James I., was that it established religious distinctions, and gave religious preferences; that it sought to expel the Roman Catholic inhabitants, in order to introduce those of another religion, on whose allegiance it was supposed there were greater claims; and I said this for the express purpose of preventing the possibility of being subjected to the charge which, now, after an interval of three weeks, the honourable gentleman prefers, that I had some sinister object in view—that I desired to expel the Roman Catholics, for the purpose of substituting a Protestant population. Sir, I had no such



object, but what I wished was, by creating a demand for labour, to give to the Roman Catholic peasant the opportunity of obtaining self-independence. The object I had was to secure to him, if possible, 1s., perhaps 1s. 6d. a day; and that, after all, is the foundation of all other improvements; I never believed the doctrine by which some attempt to relieve themselves from the obligation which attaches to them? I never believed that the Celtic population had an inherent slothfulness in its character, and that the Irish labourers were anxious to avoid work. I take those men who come over from time to time to obtain labour in this country, and I ask any gentleman who has met them on the road, or in the field, and conversed with them, as I do, whether he has not left them with feelings of admiration of their respectful politeness, their natural intelligence, and with the conviction that the God of nature could never have intended such men for serfs? It has been said that they are a turbulent people, and that no laws can restrain or improve them. I ask, can you who see them in the English counties, where they go to seek for employment, find men more obedient to the law—more prudent or forbearing under, I am sorry to say, frequently much provocation? can you find men more industrious, or more desirous to save, and remit some part of their earnings to their families at home, or to pay their rent, and to keep their families from the workhouse? Is not this the universal experience of every English member who has conversed or communicated with these men? I repudiate, then, the doctrine that slothfulness and inactivity are the characteristics of the Celtic population."

Sir Robert Peel then referred to the management of the Irish estates of the Drapers' Company of London, which he eulogized as highly advantageous to the Roman Catholic population, and also stated that the Fishmongers' Company had pursued a similarly beneficial course. He concluded by

remarking, that he happened to be reading a letter detailing these facts—one of many hundreds that he daily received upon the subject of Ireland—when Mr. Grattan made the charge against him, that he desired to substitute a Protestant for the Roman Catholic population, he could not resist the temptation of rising to repel it. He felt it to be impossible, having heard so great a mis-statement of his intentions, to remain silent without giving it the flattest contradiction.

This speech was received with much applause from both sides of the House. The long-protracted discussions that from time to time took place during this session, upon the great social questions involved in the misery of Ireland, found Sir Robert Peel always prepared. He seemed to have devoted all the energies of his mind to the consideration of a subject that indeed required all the aid that he and the other statesmen of the time could afford, and he bore by far a greater share of the burden than any other man in parliament or in the ministry. Every part of this complicated subject seemed equally familiar to him; and upon no question, not even excepting those great financial reforms on which his reputation for common sense and sound statesmanship was mainly based, did he appear to greater advantage, than when advising or warning the Irish landlords, and pointing out the duty of the legislature towards the suffering people of that country. The subject of wholesale evictions of tenantry did not escape him. On the 8th of June, in the course of a conversation respecting those which had taken place within the last twelve months, in the Kilrush union, and elsewhere, as detailed in the report of Captain Kennedy, the poor-law inspector, he emphatically denounced them as inhuman proceedings, calling for the reprobation of every friend of humanity.

Late on the same evening, Mr. Ffrench having made

some remarks upon these eloquent observations, suggesting that the legislature alone was to blame for these occurrences, and that the picture might be over-coloured; Sir Robert Peel again rose, and reiterated his statements, in a brief speech, in the course of which, according to the reports, "he appeared much moved, his voice trembling as he described the sufferings of these poor people."

He said "he could not acquiesce in the rebuke passed upon him by the honourable gentleman. All the regret he had to express was, that he had understated the case of the parties in Ireland; for, on looking again at the reports, he found that he had painted it very faintly and feebly. When he believed the Irish landlords and gentlemen had injustice done to them, he had not been slow to vindicate them; but in his opinion the Irish gentlemen themselves ought to be the first to disclaim any connexion with the acts to which reference had been made in the early part of the evening. He assumed that the papers laid upon the table of that House were correct. He presumed that her Majesty's government would not lay documents there for the guidance and conduct of honourable members in legislation, without being themselves convinced that those documents had not been grossly exaggerated. Did he make any attack on Irish landlords generally? Did he throw upon individuals a charge which might be justly attributable to legislation? He had indeed said that there were particular instances cited by Captain Kennedy, which should not be laid upon the table for one day without an inquiry into them. It was easy to say that the House of Commons was responsible for these occurrences. Let others do what they would, all the blame was charged upon the House of Commons; but was legislation, or any particular body, responsible for the acts he was going to mention? Was the House of

Commons responsible for the following act mentioned in Captain Kennedy's report?

“‘In a cow-shed adjoining this wretched cabin I found Ellen Lynch lying in an almost hopeless state of dysentery. She had been carried thither by her son when thrown out of her miserable lodging, and was threatened with momentary expulsion from even this refuge by the philanthropic owner of it; her only safety rested in the fears of all but her son to approach her.’

“Was it the fault of the House of Commons, that a woman in dysentery, driven from her cabin, had taken shelter in a cow-shed, from which she was about to be expelled by the party who evicted her from the cabin, and who was only prevented from doing so by fear of the dysentery under which she laboured? Was it the fault of the House of Commons that the only being who approached her was her son, whose filial affection overcame the fear of contagion? Did the House of Commons impose any necessity upon the landlord to evict her? No; and therefore let not honourable members try to relieve individuals from the individual responsibility which properly belonged to them. The House of Commons was no doubt responsible for bad legislation and the results of it, but let not the House be made responsible for acts of individual inhumanity. Was the House responsible for the following case, also reported by Captain Kennedy?

“‘While inspecting a stone-breaking dépôt a few days since, I observed one of the men take off his remnant of a pair of shoes, and start across the fields; I followed him with my eye, and at a distance saw the blaze of a fire in the bog. I sent a boy to inquire the cause of it, and of the man running from his work, and was told that his house had been levelled the day before, that he had erected a temporary hut on the lands, and while his wife and children were gathering shell-



fish on the strand, and he breaking stones, the bailiff, or driver, fired it.'

"Let not this be thrown upon the House of Commons, but let Irish gentlemen say, what they might say with truth, that these were individual cases. That would be a wiser and more becoming course for Irish gentlemen to adopt, than to take the one pursued by the honourable member for Rosecommon, (Mr. Ffrench,) and say that individuals were not responsible.

Mr. Ffrench—I never said that.

Sir Robert Peel—You said that I ought to be the last man to take notice of these reports, and that the legislature was responsible for what was occurring. There was one thing mentioned by Captain Kennedy, which, almost more than any other, deepened the colour of these acts. The captain said, 'These ruthless acts are submitted to with an unresisting patience hardly credible.' It was enough to awaken the liveliest feelings of sympathy, to find that the parties who were suffering in this manner, were submitting to it with a patience which exceeded belief. He did not think he was acting wrongly, when, on the first day after these reports had been laid on the table, he refused to allow such facts, so stated in public documents, to be buried in oblivion."

The government did not neglect to take advantage of some of the valuable practical suggestions thrown out by Sir Robert Peel. On the 26th of April, the governor-general moved for leave to bring in a bill for facilitating the sale of encumbered estates in Ireland, the great feature of which was, the creation of a commission to perform the functions heretofore exercised by the Court of Chancery, and with the same power to put purchasers into possession, as the sheriff had in executing a writ of possession. Sir Robert Peel supported the bill in a brief speech, in which he expressed

his cordial satisfaction at the course pursued by the government.

This important measure, upon its passing into law, was speedily tested. It seemed, for a time, probable that the corporation of London would purchase, and bring under cultivation, the large estates of Mr. Martin in Galway, but the project, though much talked of, was never carried out. But private purchasers for encumbered estates were speedily found, and solvent landlords were introduced into many parts of Ireland, where such luxuries to a starving people had not been known for generations. This healing process was carried on during the years 1849 and 1850, and at the present time (1851) estates in every part of Ireland are passing into new hands. It is too soon to assert the advantage that has accrued to the country, but that the change will be greatly beneficial, there is no reason to doubt; and that it will be mainly due to the wise suggestions of Sir Robert Peel, few or none will be found to deny.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

## THE REPORT OF THE NAVIGATION LAWS—COLONIAL RELATIONS, ETC.—

THE question of the Navigation Laws, pointedly alluded to in the speech from the throne, was again brought under the consideration of parliament by her Majesty's government, and this time at a period of the session which left ample time for fighting the great battle of free-trade in all its possible details. On the 16th of February, Mr. Labouchere, in a committee of the whole House, moved a resolution, on which to found a bill or bills "to remove the restrictions which prevented the free carriage of goods by sea, to and from the United Kingdom, and the British possessions abroad; and to amend the laws regulating the coasting-trade of the United Kingdom, subject, nevertheless, to such control by her Majesty in council as might be necessary; and to amend the laws for the registration of ships and seamen." After a desultory debate, the resolution was agreed to, and the bill brought in; Mr. Herries, who had led the Protectionist cause, reserving his opposition till the second reading. On the 9th of March, accordingly, Mr. Herries moved that the bill be read a second time that day six months, whilst Mr. Gladstone, in the course of the debate that ensued, suggested, as a middle course, to adopt "the reciprocity system" of Mr. Huskisson. The great principle of unconditional free-trade was, however, adopted on a division, by 266 against 210 votes. In the House of Lords the second reading was carried (May 8th) by 173 votes against 163, after a debate which lasted twelve hours. The opposition,

encouraged by the smallness of the majority, was renewed with still more vigour in the committee on the bill; and Lord Stanley brought forward an amendment, which was considered to be the last great effort of the Protectionist party, to defeat it. Strictly speaking, its object was not the amendment, but the destruction of the bill; in fact, to retain the navigation laws, giving the Queen power to relax them by degrees with such nations as should offer reciprocal advantages. The ministerial bill, as Lord Lansdowne remarked, proposed to remove all restrictions except those imposed by necessity; whilst Lord Stanley, by his amendment, proposed to keep up all restrictions except those which we were forced to abandon by circumstances we could not resist. Lord Stanley, in introducing his amendment, confessed that he had not sufficient confidence that the opinions of the mercantile world had been ascertained; and stated, that he could "not speak with confidence upon the details." This confession was surprising, when it was considered that the bill had been for two sessions before parliament, and that no subject in our time, not even the repeal of the corn laws, had been more thoroughly discussed in all its bearings. The amendment dealt with generalities, and attempted, in reality, though not, perhaps, in form, to make the House reject in committee, a measure to the principle of which it had given its assent on the second reading. This was a course of proceeding rather unusual, as was pointed out by several of their lordships in the course of the debate. The chief supporter of the amendment was Lord Brougham; between whom and Lord Stanley there was, however, some difference of opinion. Lord Stanley defended the reciprocity system from the charge of "peddling and meanness" which had been brought against it by the free-traders; and maintained, that, as a nation, "we should lose wealth" by the measure,



and that we had no business to be generous or magnanimous. "If we carried on a commercial business," said his lordship, "we ought to carry it on upon the commercial principle, of giving nothing for nothing." Lord Brougham, on the contrary, was willing to admit, that, upon the commercial principle, we might gain a fraction of a farthing in the pound on the value of tea, sugar, or cotton, by the bill; nevertheless, as he maintained that "commerce was not everything," he preferred the national defences to the increase of our wealth. But these were only a few of the discrepancies in the arguments of those who opposed the bill; to most of which, Lords Lansdowne, Wharncliffe, Clanricarde, and others, did ample justice. The amendment was rejected by a majority of 116 against 103. The bill passed the third reading without a division on the 11th of July.

Another important question, which had been a good deal agitated by Mr. Cobden, Mr. Hume, and others, during the recess, namely, the reform of our financial system, involving a considerable reduction in the national expenditure, was brought on by the first-named gentleman, in a substantive motion on the 26th of February. Mr. Cobden showed, from parliamentary papers, that whilst the net expenditure of the government in 1835 had amounted to about £44,500,000, that for 1849 had amounted to somewhat over £54,000,000; and his object was, by a reduction chiefly in the army, navy, and ordnance expenditure, to bring the cost of government back to the estimate which had been found sufficient fourteen years previously.

The main argument of Mr. Cobden for the reduction was temperately and eloquently stated; but it failed to bring the conviction to the minds of his hearers, that reduction was immediately practicable. It was true, as he stated, that when there was an alarm of invasion on the part of

Russia in 1836, 5,000 men were added to our naval force; that when rebellion broke out in Canada in 1838, the army was increased by 8,000 soldiers; that when the insurrection led by Frost, Williams, and Jones, took place in Wales in 1839, the nation augmented its military force by another 5,000 men; that in 1840-41, when Great Britain was embroiled in the Syrian war, and threatened with a rupture with France, an addition of the same number of men was once more made to our army; that the dispute with the government of the United States, relative to the main boundary, caused an addition of 4,000 men to our naval forces; that the Oregon difficulty led to the increase of our expenditure in the military, naval, and ordnance departments, of £1,600,000; and that each and all of these augmentations were continued until the time at which Mr. Cobden spoke, although the dangers and difficulties which they were severally levied to combat or to guard against had passed away. These were all strong points, and they were strongly argued. But Mr. Cobden, unfortunately for his case, did not prove, although these dangers had passed away, that no other dangers of equal magnitude existed, to call forth the exercise of our foresight, and the display of such resources as might prove to Europe and the world that Great Britain was ready for all contingencies. It was in vain to deny the fact, that the affairs of Europe were at that time in a very unsettled state; and that, either with or without our consent, or by the operation of an irresistible and uncontrollable necessity, we might be implicated in the actual wars of Europe, and compelled to display physical force, to hold our own against the world. The friends of peace might have attempted to gloss over the disagreeable apprehension, excited by the then affairs of the world, by panegyrics upon the desirableness of international amity; and might have brought for-

ward proof upon proof of the fact not to be denied, that the true interest and wisest policy of all nations were to mind their own affairs without embroiling themselves with those of their neighbours. All sensible men agreed in the truth of such opinions; yet the impression remained, and could not be got rid of, that there would be great danger, in the then state of Europe, for any nation holding first or second rank, if it were quite unprepared for war. The world of civilization was in the throes of change; fear and perplexity were among the nations; mankind had not learned to rely upon truth, justice, and moral force. War, in spite of reason, was the *ultima ratio* of all disputes. The impression that it was dangerous to remain unprepared was so strong, that it was useless to argue with it. All men, except the amiable enthusiasts who dreamed of the reign of universal righteousness, confessed that one great means of preserving peace was to be ready for war. Even the unhappily numerous class of persons in England, who suffered from the excess of taxation, would not, if they had questioned themselves closely, have consented at that time to run the risk of defencelessness. Mr. Cobden seemed to be aware of this feeling, and gave his motion the vagueness which characterized it, because he saw the futility of urging any specific reduction in the face of it.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, in opposing the motion, contended, that the year 1835 could not fairly be taken as the standard year, to which all the future expenditure of the state was to be accommodated. Our expenses necessarily increased with our population, and the extension of our relations in every part of the world. At the same time, he assured the House of the constant anxiety of her Majesty's ministers to effect "all those reductions which they thought could be effected consistently with the interests of the country, and the real welfare of all its industrial resources." Upon

a division, Mr. Cobden's motion was negatived by 275 votes against 78.

On the 20th of February, Mr. Baillie, in a long speech, full of details, brought under the consideration of the House recent circumstances and events connected with the crown-colonies of Ceylon and British Guiana, and concluded by moving for the appointment of a select committee to inquire into the grievances complained of by these colonies, and to report whether any measures would be adopted for their better administration and government. He charged the colonial government with acts of tyranny and oppression against the native population, and also with wasteful and extravagant expenditure, by which the most onerous burdens were imposed on the inhabitants. But the main feature involved in the discussion, was the charge against Lord Torrington, who had been recently appointed governor of Ceylon. It was alleged, that his lordship had committed acts of unnecessary cruelty against the parties who had been implicated in an attempted revolt, which had been promptly suppressed by her Majesty's troops, without the loss of a single life on their part. Two of the acts specifically charged against him were, that he had caused a priest to be shot in his pontifical robes, thereby wounding the religious feeling of the people; and that he had caused a native prince to be publicly whipped, prior to his execution. As the whole system of our colonial government, or misgovernment, had been much canvassed at this time, Mr. Baillie's motion excited unusual attention.

Mr. Hume, a gentleman who did not generally act with the party of which Mr. Baillie was a member, seconded the motion, wishing the House to understand, that it was the system under which our colonies were placed, which had produced the disastrous results described by Mr. Baillie. He dilated upon the harsh treatment which Ceylon had expe-



rienced; upon the insult which Demerara had received at the hands of the Colonial Secretary, in the matter of the civil list; and claimed for the colonies that self-government which was denied only on account of the patronage it would wrest from the Colonial office. Mr. Hume somewhat confused the matter, by introducing the grievances of the Cingalese into a sentence, in which he urged self-government as a cure for colonial dissatisfaction; but, though a staunch free-trader, he saw no Protectionist trap in the motion, but simply a colonial question of the gravest importance. Mr. Ricardo, a free-trader, still more greatly confused the subject and the debate, by proposing an addition to the motion, affirming in effect, though not in terms, that no inquiry would be made into the grievances of either, with a view to interference with the free-trade tariff of 1846. The debate, consequently, took a turn that was not anticipated by the friends of the government and by Mr. Ricardo, but which was not ultimately successful in distracting the attention of the House from the real point at issue—the protracted mismanagement of the British colonies generally.

Sir Robert Peel cleared away the smoke and dust of the discussion raised by Mr. Ricardo. He gave the complainants of Demerara to understand, that he was decidedly opposed to re-consideration, to suit their purposes, of the free-trade measures of 1846. At the same time, as the House seemed to be agreed on the main point, he wished a resolution to be brought forward, for an inquiry to ascertain, without special reference to the minister then at the head of the Colonial department, whether some change might not be effected in our colonial system, which would give general satisfaction both to the colonies and to the public at home. Mr. Baillie afterwards amended his motion. Mr. Hume added a few words, which rendered all miscon-

ception impossible upon the part of the few free-traders who supported Mr. Ricardo; and in this form the resolution was carried without a division. This result was, in reality, a defeat of the ministers.

Another subject, much agitated at this period, was the policy of our treaties and armed intervention for the suppression of the slave-trade. It was not denied, that our blockade of the African coast had entailed a great expense upon the country, whilst the hateful traffic which it was designed to suppress, had thriven in spite of all opposition; those engaged in it only making a larger premium upon their successful cargoes than heretofore, in consideration of the extra labour and risk in which they were involved. On the 23d of April, Mr. Milner Gibson met the question by moving for leave to bring in a bill to repeal the "Brazilian act," 8 and 9 Victoria, which was passed in 1845, to give increased efficacy to a treaty made with the Brazilian government in 1826, for the suppression of the slave-trade, and the punishment for piracy of those engaged in it. This act gave the British government a criminal jurisdiction over Brazilian subjects, which Mr. Gibson contended was contrary to the Law of Nations. The motion for the repeal of this act was supported by Mr. Bright, Mr. Hume, and others, but resisted by Lord Palmerston on behalf of the government; Sir Robert Peel also spoke in favour of supporting the jurisdiction claimed by the British crown, until the whole policy involved in the question was fairly and fully before the House.

The right honourable baronet said, "he desired that the discussion should have been postponed to another opportunity, when the whole question might be brought under consideration. He did not think that the argument of the honourable member for Montrose (Mr. Hume) was valid, when he said that because the slaves suffered on the passage, owing to the endeavours made by the

slavers to avoid the cruisers, that the blockade was therefore to be abandoned. The bill of 1845 passed the Lords unanimously, and the House of Commons, which was now invited by its single vote to repeal that act, also passed it without any difficulty. Certain letters had been referred to from the Lord Chief Justice of the Common Pleas, stating that certain acts of the legislature were erroneous ; but the chief justice referred to was a member of the House of Commons at the time that bill passed. He certainly offered objections to the third clause, and pointed out difficulties in the way of its execution ; but those objections were overruled. If the House were to be governed by authorities, he entreated them to consider that they themselves assented to this bill unanimously in 1845, and that the House of Lords also, without the slightest objection, assented to it. If they considered that that bill were a violation of international law, let them repeal it if they would ; but let them never attempt hereafter to convince the people of England that their decision was an authority. The right honourable member for Manchester, (Mr. Milner Gibson,) said, and as he (Sir Robert Peel) thought truly, that no one-country could undertake to carry into execution the municipal law of another country ; but then there was one case which the right honourable gentleman had omitted, and that was the present case, where two countries agreed by convention to make a certain act, piracy ; for then, by virtue of that convention, both countries were bound to carry that act into effect. It was not the case of one country undertaking to execute the municipal law of another, or undertaking to substitute the courts of one municipal jurisdiction for those of another. But the case was this. Two countries perfectly competent to enter into international obligations, resolved to make a certain act an offence which they called piracy, and one of those countries acted in manifest violation of

that convention. Was there then, he would ask, anything contrary to the principle of equity, in the other country undertaking to punish that as an offence? This country by doing so was exercising no jurisdiction over the subjects of another; but was only acting up to the terms of the convention. In the present case, what right had the subjects of Brazil to insist on our forbearance? Never was there a more flagrant violation of all promises and professions than had been committed by Brazil. It might be said that the Brazilians had not the power to carry out their professions. Then that was an additional reason why this country should step in to see that the terms of the contract were fulfilled. Now, this was an account taken from the very highest authority, of what Brazil had done. Lord Aberdeen said, that, with rare and short exceptions, the treaty entered into by Brazil, had been by them systematically violated. ‘Cargoes of slaves,’ Lord Aberdeen went on to say, ‘have been landed in open day in the streets of the capital, and bought and sold like cattle, without any obstacle whatever being imposed upon the traffic. Our officers, acting under the direction of the government, and influenced by the ordinary dictates of humanity, have interfered to protect those slaves. Our officers have been waylaid, maltreated, and even assassinated, while in the execution of their duty; and justice in such cases, if not actually denied, has never been fairly granted. No doubt, much has happened during the last ten or twelve years, which might have called for, and would almost have justified, national resentment; but the government had no wish save to provide for the effectual execution of the treaty, as stipulated for by the 1st article.’ That was the reason which led to the passing of that bill of 1845; and he warned the House that if they now repealed that act, they would never get any convention with Brazil, and need never hope to effect their object by any negotiations whatever. Let them



repeal that bill, and he believed that they would substantially proclaim to the world that all their efforts to prevent the slave-trade, and to mitigate its horrors, were at an end; and having done that, his advice to them would be to determine how they could best encourage it! Let them sanction the present bill, prevent the horrors of the middle passage, permit Cuba and Brazil to carry on the slave-trade to their heart's content without opposition on our part, and proclaim abroad that we were determined no longer to interpose to rescue the African race from the miseries which surrounded them!"

The motion was lost by 137, against 34 votes.

The remaining great question of Colonial policy, by the agitation of which the opposition sought to disturb the repose of ministers, was that of the Canadian Indemnity act for losses sustained during the rebellion of 1837 and 1838; and which, having been passed by the Canadian assembly, awaited only the assent of the crown. Mr. Gladstone brought the subject before the House on the 14th of June; his principal observations being directed to the danger which existed, that, under the act, persons who had actually taken part in the rebellion would receive indemnification for their losses. He therefore called upon the government to give the House an assurance that precautions would be taken to prevent such a result.

This speech, though it led to no definite issue, was one calculated to excite a great deal of angry feeling between the rival parties in Canada, and, by consequence, to increase the anxieties of government. It was ably replied to by Lord John Russell, who set forth the grounds of the measure, and disposed of the needless apprehensions expressed by the honourable member. Mr. Herries, who led "the country party," followed the noble lord, and sought to bring the question to an issue, by moving an address to the crown,

praying that the royal assent might be withheld from the Canada Indemnity act, "without, and until her Majesty should have received satisfactory assurances that no person who had engaged in aiding or abetting in that unnatural rebellion, (of 1837 and 1838,) should be permitted to participate in the indemnity so proposed." This motion took the House completely by surprise, and Lord John Russell complained that it was made without notice. Mr. Herries and his supporters seeing their advantage, sought to bring the question to an immediate division; but in this they were not supported by Mr. Gladstone and his friends, and the adjournment was carried by a majority of 65. On the following day, the debate was resumed. Mr. Labouchere took the high ground of declaring, that, if he thought that the Canadian legislature could have agreed to a measure to indemnify rebels, he would not desire to continue the connection between Great Britain and that colony.

Sir Robert Peel, on this occasion, lent his powerful aid to the government, and supported them, if not zealously, at least effectually, against the attacks of their opponents. He said, "he understood the amendment of Mr. Herries to mean, that a measure approved of by the majority of the Canadian assembly should not be sanctioned, unless an amendment should be adopted, which amendment had already been submitted by a small minority to the Canadian assembly, and rejected. They were thus asked to enter into a conflict with a powerful colony, and they should look to the circumstance in which they were urged to that conflict."

After a passing eulogy of the character and conduct of Lord Elgin, Sir Robert Peel proceeded to say, that the question for consideration was, "had the present government, in providing compensation for Lower Canada, materially departed from the principle of the act which gave compen-

sation to Upper Canada? If they had not, would not the duty they had to perform be particularly invidious? If, in point of fact, the act which they were called upon to reject, contained in it no provision materially at variance with that which preceded, would it not be an exceedingly invidious thing to reject it? Why was it not pointed out to Lord Elgin, that in the case of Upper Canada, no proper distinction was made between loyal and disloyal—that the honour of the British crown was concerned, and that compensation to the loyal inhabitants only should be granted? What took place in Lower Canada? Lord Metcalfe appointed a commission to provide compensation for the loyal inhabitants; but when Lord Cathcart assumed the government, his secretary, Mr. Daly, issued instructions with regard to the classification of persons who were to receive compensation, which varied materially from those of the commission; and upon Mr. Daly being questioned on the subject, his answer was, that it was not the intention of the governor that any other principle should be adopted respecting the classification of those who were to receive compensation, than the evidence given in the tribunals of justice. It was in consequence of these instructions that the commission appointed by Lord Metcalfe proceeded to settle the claims. Under these circumstances, did the honour of the crown require this extraordinary intervention? Ought they to withhold the discretion of the crown in this stage of the proceeding? Ought they to assume for the popular branch of the constitution that which properly belonged to the crown, and take upon them the responsibility of advising the crown to suspend or cancel this act? He thought it would be much wiser to leave the discretion and responsibility with the crown, and not to commit themselves to a contest with the popular assembly of Canada, which, if they so interfered, he foresaw would be inevitable. He

deprecatcd deeply any course, on the part of that House, which would concede a material distinction between the cases of the two Canadas. As he said before, he was willing to draw a distinction between loyal and disloyal. Indeed, he should deplore the day when the House of Commons should be unwilling to give due credit to men who, in times of danger and trouble, rallied under the British standard, for the protection of British connection. But he could not allow that feeling to influence him so far as to become a party to a measure which he believed would be destructive of the principle of representative government; or to consent to an interference in the affairs of the colony, and with those local concerns with which we must be imperfectly acquainted, which might cloud the prospect of a long, a permanent, and a cordial connection with a colony, in the welfare and prosperity of which England ought to feel the deepest interest."

Mr. Herries' resolution was lost by 291 votes against 150—or by a majority of 141. So essential to the government, at this period, was the aid of Sir Robert Peel, and the devoted party of adherents which voted on all occasions with him, that it became a standing reproach against the administration, that they only held office by the favour and toleration of their opponents. It could not be denied, however, that the support which it was in the power of Sir Robert Peel to bestow, was derivable entirely from the high reputation he enjoyed in the country for sagacity and practical statesmanship. Even the Protectionists, who were inclined to mistrust him on all other subjects, because he had repealed the corn-laws, yielded to his superior judgment on all those doubtful and neutral questions on which his opinion was sought;—a high tribute to his character, considering the circumstances under which it was given, and the party from which it came.



The affairs of India wore a threatening aspect at the opening of the year. The warlike and ambitious nation of the Sikhs aimed at a consummation no less mighty than the expulsion of the British from India. The first symptoms of the approaching conflict in the Punjaub, were detected by Lieutenant, afterwards Major Edwardes, who took, without orders, the bold step of beleaguering the strong fortress of Mooltan, in the possession of a Sikh chieftain named Moolraj. The danger soon became evident, and a British army, under the command of Lord Gough, was despatched to the Punjaub.

A murderous conflict occurred (on the 13th of January) on the left bank of the river Jhelum, near, or as was alleged by some, on the very spot which, 2,000 years previously, formed the battle-field of Alexander and Porus. The British army under the command of Lord Gough, and the Sikh forces led by the Rajah Shere Singh, met at Chilianwallah. A struggle ensued, in which the British had to deplore the loss of at least 33 officers, and 2,500 men killed and wounded; four guns captured, and four or five regimental colours taken by the enemy. The struggle terminated in victory, but was disgraced by the flight of a Bengal cavalry regiment, and the retreat of two British corps of dragoons. Both of the contending hosts were so weak and shattered, that it was doubtful which had sustained the greater injury from the conflict. The victory had so few of the badges of triumph for the conquerors, that their opponents took up a new position, and fired a salute in honour of its termination.

It was generally conceded upon this occasion, both in India and in England, that the gallant Lord Gough had been exasperated into an ill-timed battle by the enemy, and that, if his valour were worthy of the highest praise, his prudence was, at all events, questionable. So great was the alarm, that nothing less than the presence in India of



*Genl. Marshall, Major-General, U.S.A.*



Sir Charles Napier would satisfy the public feeling. This gallant soldier, whose conquest of Scinde was fresh in the recollection of the world, and especially remembered by all the native princes and chiefs of India, was induced, after urgent solicitation, to leave his retirement at home, and undertake, for a limited time, and a special occasion, the chief command of the Indian army. But before he arrived at his destination, Lord Gough had caused all anxiety to disappear. Chillianwallah was destined to be signally avenged ; and, on the 21st of February, his lordship met and defeated the combined forces of Chuttur Singh and Shere Singh. This decisive battle took place near Goojerat. The Sikh army had remained in an entrenched camp at Russool, a few miles from the field of Chillianwallah. Lord Gough was entrenched in a strong position in front of the Sikhs, where he seemed to be patiently awaiting the reinforcements of General Whish, who, having captured the fortress of Moultan, was marching to join him. On the 11th of February, the Sikhs broke up their encampment at Russool, and moved in the direction of the town of Jhelum, on the river of the same name. This was but a diversion to lead Lord Gough astray, as it appears that the British army remained in ignorance of the real movements of the enemy until the 14th, when it was known that, instead of retreating over the Jhelum, Shere Singh had advanced upon the Chenab, and taken possession of the town of Goojerat. This indicated the bold plan of marching direct upon Lahore ; a plan which it appears that Lord Gough would, from the disposition of his force, have been unable to defeat, unless for assistance, which, under the circumstances, he had no right to calculate upon. General Whish, by a series of rapid marches, arrived with his victorious detachment at the Chenab in time to take possession of the ford at Wuzccrabad, and prevent the passage



of the Sikh army. The Sikh forces were thus driven back into the plain between the two rivers; and General Whish having effected a junction with Lord Gough, battle was given to Shere Singh on the 21st. The Sikh chieftain was defeated at all points, and fled, leaving the larger portion of his guns and ammunition, as well as his standing camp, in the possession of the victors. The result of this battle was the annexation of the Punjaub to the British dominions in India, and the total overthrow of the Sikh power.

For this service, the thanks of parliament were voted to the Governor-General, to Lord Gough, and to the army, (April 24th.) Sir Robert Peel took occasion to bear his tribute to the high professional character and long and valuable services of the distinguished commander. He said:—

“ I should not have presumed to add my voice to that of the right honourable gentleman, (Sir J. C. Hobhouse, President of the Board of Control,) at this time, were it not that, upon four previous occasions, I had been a party to proceedings whereby the merits of Lord Gough had been brought under the consideration of the Commons’ House of parliament. It is with the utmost satisfaction that I have seen that that noble soldier has closed a long career of victory and glory by an achievement worthy of his former distinguished services. He has for fifty-four years served the crown of England. If, at the earlier period of this campaign, there were any doubts as to its ultimate result, I must say, that in those doubts I never shared. I felt the utmost confidence that, in its result, that campaign would redound to the honour of Lord Gough, and would give a new security to the British possessions in the East. Sir, I do rejoice at the glorious termination of that battle; and I rejoice, especially, at the numerous proofs given by the right honourable gentleman, that great exploits have been performed, not by veterans inured to service, but by young men, assuming great

responsibility, and giving examples worthy of the name of Englishmen. When, sir, such things are done by the aged, and such examples are set by the young, never can we despair of the glory of this country."

The bill for the removal of the civil disabilities of the Jews, was again passed by the House of Commons, and again thrown out by the House of Lords, in the course of the session. On the occasion of the second reading in the Lower House, Mr. Frederick Peel, the second son of Sir Robert Peel, made his maiden speech in support of the measure. His illustrious father is represented to have been much gratified with the talent which his son exhibited, and the compliments which the speech elicited from all sides of the House, and even from the ranks of Sir Robert's personal opponents, were given with a fervour and sincerity in the highest degree creditable to them, and agreeable to Sir Robert.

Immediately after the bill was thrown out by the House of Lords, Baron Rothschild tendered his resignation as one of the members for the City of London, but at the same time announced himself as a candidate for re-election, the object being to test the state of public feeling amongst the electors of the metropolis, upon the great question of political and religious liberty involved in his case. At the last moment, Lord John Manners was announced as a candidate in opposition to him, but the baron was elected by a majority of more than two to one, or 6,017 against 2,814.

As the opinions expressed by Sir Robert Peel on all public questions are now matters of historical interest, it would not be right to omit reference to a few observations which fell from him on the occasion of a motion by Mr. Trelawny, (March 13th,) for the abolition of Church-Rates. To this Mr. P. Wood moved an amendment, to relieve "per-

sons dissenting from the church" from the payment of church-rates. Sir Robert Peel deprecated a hasty decision upon such a question; though, at the same time, he did not go the length of condemning as impracticable some modification of the system by which funds for the repair of churches are raised:—

"The resolutions which they were asked to affirm, was, in point of fact, a condemnation of the law as to church-rates, but surely the House ought not to deal with so complicated and difficult a matter as this, by a resolution. The first, or second reading of a bill, did not commit the House to its ultimate acceptance, but the affirmation of a resolution placed the House in a position whence it could not recede, without exposing itself to the clear imputation of flagrant inconsistency. Suppose the resolution adopted, they must at once proceed to the introduction of a bill. Suppose that bill rejected, in what a position would the country be placed as regarded church-rates. As yet no distinct proposition had been made as to a substitution for the church-rate proposed to be abolished: true, various projects had been suggested, but the very number and vagueness of these suggestions should operate as a warning to the House not to commit itself on the present occasion. As to the proposition of the honourable and learned member for Oxford, he could not conceive a greater evil than to lay down the proposition that persons, calling themselves Dissenters, might exempt themselves, not from a religious feeling, but merely to escape a small payment. Some years since, it was proposed by Lord Althorp to repeal church-rates, and to transfer the burden to the Consolidated Fund, perhaps the most obvious alternative; but, looking at the opposition to the payment as a question of religious scruple, it appeared very clear, that the feeling would be infinitely enhanced by a transference of the charge to the Consolidated

Fund. In the country districts, the case would most assuredly be so, the main burden of the payment being there sustained by the landed gentry, the large proportion of whom were members of the church. It appeared to him, that, if this resolution were adopted, and any person professing to be a Dissenter were to be exempt from the payment of this recognized obligation, there would next week be a demand set up for exemption from tithes on the same grounds. The honourable gentleman opposite suggested, that the church property itself, if improved, as it might be, was fully adequate to the payment of church-rates; but the honourable gentleman did not take into consideration the large demands made on the church by reason of the present imperfect parochial system, the increase of the population, and the daily rising demand in all directions for extended spiritual instruction. Improve the value of church property as you might, these demands would more than absorb the whole result. He was not one of those who opposed the re-distribution of the revenues of the church; he had given proofs to the contrary in his proposal to apply the revenues of sinecures in the church, and other ecclesiastical funds, to the extension of livings, and the improvement of livings already created. But, still, he would express the hope, that the gentlemen of England would never consent to relieve themselves from a burden to which they were properly subject, in order to transfer it to other shoulders. He would entreat the House to reserve the matter for more mature consideration."

Both the motion and amendment were lost by large majorities. Mr. Trelawny's obtaining only 20, and Mr. P. Wood's 84 votes, against 183 and 119 respectively.



## CHAPTER XIX.

TACTICS OF THE OPPOSITION—MR. D'ISRAELI'S MOTIONS ON THE AGRICULTURAL INTERESTS, AND THE STATE OF THE NATION.

THE opposition of the Protectionist party was not limited to the incidental motions upon particular features of policy alluded to in the preceding chapters. Early in the session (March 8th) Mr. D'Israeli made an attempt to indemnify the agricultural interests for the supposed wrongs done them by the adoption of a free-trade policy, by moving resolutions for their relief from peculiar burdens pressing upon land.

The resolutions stated, "that the whole of the local taxation of the country for national purposes was imposed mainly, if not exclusively, on real property, pressing with undue severity on the occupiers of land, and in a manner injurious to the agricultural interests of the country, and was otherwise highly impolitic, injurious, and unjust.

"That the hardship of this apportionment was aggravated by the fact, that more than one-third of the whole revenue derived from the excise duties was levied on agricultural produce, which was exposed, by recent changes in the law, to direct competition with the untaxed produce of foreign countries; and that the home-producer being thus subject to the burden of taxes,—which, by greatly enhancing the prices of, limited the demand for, British produce,—was exposed to restrictions which injuriously interfered with the conduct of his trade and the exercise of his industry."

It was therefore moved, "that the House should resolve itself into a committee, to take into consideration the removal

of the grievancees, of which the owners and occupiers of real property complained, and to establish a more equitable apportionment of the public burdens."

To these, Mr. Hume moved, as an amendment:—

"That if the local taxation of the country fell unequally on landed property, or bore with undue severity upon the occupiers of land, (of which there was no proof before the House,) such inequalities and undue pressure ought to be removed; but, with the view of giving speedy relief to the agricultural and other interests of the country, without detriment to the claims of the national creditor, the public expenditure, now excessive, ought to be forthwith reduced, so as to enable parliament to repeal totally the duties on malt and hops, and to remove, as soon as practicable, other taxes which impede the progress of agricultural and commercial industry."

After an adjourned debate, in which men of all parties took part, but in which Sir Robert Peel did not join, the House rejected Mr. Hume's amendment by 394 against 70 votes; and Mr. D'Israeli's resolutions by 280 against 189 votes. Little more was heard of the distresses of the agricultural interests, or those of the country in general, until a later period of the session, when the same opposition leader again opened up the subject with a still more sweeping and comprehensive motion.

On the 2nd of July, Mr. D'Israeli brought forward a motion for a committee of the whole House on the state of the nation. He contended, that great and general distress prevailed in the country, and that it had been progressing since the formation of the Russell ministry. In the course of a long and elaborate speech, he drew a dismal picture of the past and present state of the country, and one still more so of the future; but as it would be neither useful nor entertaining, we will not repeat prog-

nostications, many of which have been already falsified by actual experience.

The debate was a memorable one, however, inasmuch as it called up Sir Robert Peel, on the second night, with an eloquent, careful, and circumstantial speech, in defence of the general policy which he had originated, and which his successors had persevered in.

Sir Robert Peel said, "I do not intend to enter at any length into those considerations of a purely political nature, which are naturally raised by the question brought forward by the honourable member for Buckinghamshire. I should find it totally out of my power to do justice to those considerations during the period I could fairly expect the House to lend me its attention. To discuss the question of Ireland, the question of the colonial policy, and the question of the foreign policy of this country in one speech, must, if any attempt were made to do justice to these various considerations, absorb so much time of the House, that little would be left for the discussion of that which I consider to be the main point at issue this night—namely, shall we displace the government for the purpose of subverting the commercial policy which they are pursuing? Since the accession of the present government to power, I have felt it to be my duty to give to the great majority of the measures which it has introduced, my general support. I have made allowance for the great difficulties with which they had to contend;—commercial convulsions; famine in Ireland; and the greatest moral and social revolution by which the peace of Europe or the tranquillity of individual states was ever threatened. I have thought that it was for the public interest that the energy and the power of the executive government of this country, during such a crisis, should not be impaired by factious or captious opposition. At the same time, I wish it to be distinctly understood, that all I mean

to imply by the vote I shall give this night, is this, that I cordially approve of the general principles of commercial policy by which her Majesty's government has been guided, and that I will not consent to a motion, the direct and avowed object, or at least the main object, of which is, to censure them for their adherence to those principles of commercial policy, and to substitute in their place some other economical principles. I understand the honourable gentleman to impeach the commercial policy which has been acted on for some time, and to attribute to that commercial policy a great part of the sufferings under which it is admitted that some interests in this country, and portions of this country, are now labouring. I was struck, I confess, by an admission of the honourable gentleman at the commencement of his speech. I owe him the acknowledgment, which I willingly pay to him, for that admission. He was describing the state of the government of this country when the noble lord succeeded to office; and he made this admission with respect to the position and the influence of the government in 1846. He said that Europe generally was enjoying tranquillity—that there was great confidence reposed in her Majesty's government—that if troubles arose, there was a ready reference to the authority of the British government, and a willing acquiescence in its decision, in order to arrive at a solution of those difficulties. He said, moreover, that Ireland was in a state of comparative prosperity, that the agricultural interest was contented, and looked forward with hope to the future. He said that the greatest export trade that this country had ever carried on was carried on in the year 1845; and that the present government, in succeeding to power, had found a surplus of some two or three, or three or four millions in the Treasury.

“Well, if that was the state of the country then, if all interests were so prosperous, if such was the condition of



our finances, such the condition of our export trade, I ask this question, what were the principles of commercial policy which had been adopted for some years previous to that period? I find that in the year 1841 there was a deficit of upwards of £2,500,000. In the preceding year, 1840, you had adopted the system of imposing additional duties upon imports; you had placed five per cent. in addition to all the existing duties you found upon the import of raw materials, upon articles of food, upon everything which constituted the import trade of the country. I find that that addition so placed upon imports had produced no corresponding augmentation of the revenue, but directly the reverse. In the case of additions to the assessed taxes, in the case of additions to direct taxation, the anticipations of the Chancellor of the Exchequer had been realized; but in the instances of additions to customs' duties upon imports, his anticipations had not been realized; the nominal 5 per cent. of additional taxation, had produced no 5 per cent. of additional revenue. But in 1842 you adopted a different principle. You imposed an income-tax, and you reduced taxation upon all the great articles of subsistence. You reduced taxation upon the raw materials of manufacture, upon food, upon the subsistence of the people. You found prohibition upon every animal which constitutes food; you found prohibition upon meat; you found high protection upon corn; you found heavy duties upon raw materials. You adopted a different system in 1842. You imposed an income-tax, by which £5,000,000 were raised; you remitted the prohibition upon the import of animals and of meat; you reduced the duties upon every article which enters into the subsistence of the great body of the people. You greatly reduced the protective duties upon corn; upon 555 articles of customs, you reduced the duties; and the result was—what the honourable gentleman describes to have been the

state of this country in 1846. But then, says the honourable gentleman, in 1846 you adopted a totally new principle; and, from the introduction of that new principle have resulted the evil consequences which we deplore in 1848. Now, my answer to the honourable gentleman upon that point is this: In 1846 we adopted no new commercial principle. We certainly carried further the commercial principle which had been adopted in 1842. What new principle was introduced in 1846, that told in 1848? Before the end of 1845, the duties upon cotton had been repealed, the duty upon wool had been repealed. In 1844 the reductions of duty upon articles of import amounted to £1,092,000; in 1843, to £411,000; in 1844, to £458,000; in 1845, to £4,511,000. The total amount of the reduction of taxation to the end of 1845 was £6,582,000. The articles upon which that reduction had mainly taken place were either raw materials, articles of food, or articles of subsistence. The duty upon cotton had been remitted. The duty upon wool had been remitted. In 1846, was any new principle of commercial legislation introduced? The amount of duties remitted in 1846 was £1,151,000. There had been remitted £6,582,000 in the four preceding years. The articles which were selected for the reduction of taxation in 1846, were these:—tallow, an additional reduction of taxation upon timber, brandy, soap, linseed cake, rape cake,—a great many articles, on all of which it was important to the agriculturists that there should be a reduction or abolition of the duty. There was indeed provision made for the ultimate repeal of the corn-laws; but that is the single instance in respect to which you can say that any different principle of legislation was adopted in 1846, which had not been previously acted on in 1842, -43, -44, and -45. And now observe, with reference to the repeal of the corn-laws, that it did not take place till the 1st of February 1849. During 1847 and -48, you would have had duties upon corn.

From necessity, in 1847, you repealed them. The honourable member for Dorsetshire himself seconded the motion for the repeal of the corn and navigation laws at that time. In 1848 they revived; and during all that year you had a duty of from 8s. to 10s. upon corn. Consequently, if there have been any evil effects from the repeal of the corn-laws, you cannot date them from an earlier period than the 1st of February, 1849. You had protection, in so far as you thought it expedient to retain it, up to the 1st of February, 1849. It is said, however, that this tariff has caused the commercial distress; that the principles of free-trade, adopted either in 1846 or at a preceding period, have caused the distress that now prevails. Now, it is my firm conviction that the principles embodied in that tariff have not caused any one of the evils under which we labour, but that they have greatly mitigated the pressure of those evils.

“Let us take the official value of the imports into Great Britain. In 1846, the official value of the imports was 73,000,000; in 1848 it was 89,000,000. Some contend that it is the amount of imports, without any corresponding amount of exports, which has caused the depreciation of industry in this country. Let us analyze the tariff, and see of what it consists. I divide it into three great branches. First, I take the articles of consumption—of food, of luxury—of that which the people either eat or drink; I next take the raw material; and next the manufactured goods. The amount of articles of consumption imported in 1848, was no less than £32,500,000 official value. Will any man tell me that he grudges any one single pound of that amount being imported? What have they been done with? They have been imported; they have been paid for; they have been eaten by some one or other. Can you deny any one of those three propositions? Then, how have they been paid for? By gold I suppose! You have sent out your gold! It was

said, if you permit this free-trade, there will be such a derangement of the currency, that foreigners will not take your manufactured goods ; they will insist upon payment in gold, and your gold currency will be disturbed ; the reserve of the Bank will be withdrawn, and there will be a constant, injurious, and exhausting process going forward—imports, it is true, but, as a necessary consequence of these extravagant imports, the constant transmission of gold, depreciation of the currency, and the sufferings of the people ! But how do you account for this—that at the beginning of this period the Bank had about £10,000,000 of gold, and now it has £15,000,000 ? How happens it, that, concurrently with this great increase of imports, there has been at the same time no diminution of gold, but, in consequence of the state of the exchanges, an increase and accumulation of gold ? Who has consumed these £32,500,000 worth of eatable and drinkable materials ? Who grudges them ? Has there been any case of surfeit or disease ? Has the cholera been produced in consequence ? Have diseases been introduced, and sufferings entailed in consequence of this increase of imports ? I believe not ; but I believe the consumption of the whole of these imports has contributed to the material comfort of the people of this country, and that it would have been a public misfortune if these £32,000,000 had by any cause been reduced to £22,000,000 or to £25,000,000. I believe the import of those articles of subsistence has not only contributed directly to the material comfort of those who have consumed them, but that it has encouraged their labour, and caused them to encourage the labour of others. So much for the articles of consumption. Now, I come to the raw materials. The great operation of any tariff with which I have been connected was in the diminution of duties on raw materials. Is it possible to contend that you have diminished the encouragement to domestic industry, by rendering



cotton or sheep's wool cheaper? Or that the reduction of the duty on articles used in dyeing—as logwood, madder, indigo, or any of the articles forming the raw materials of manufacture—seen by possibility have had any other effect than to diminish the cost of manufactured articles, and thus enable you to contend with greater advantage with your foreign rivals? It is not possible that the reduction of the duty on those articles can have interfered with domestic industry.

“ But it is possibly the third—the import of manufactured goods. How stands the case? Here is this great commercial country interfering by the export of its manufactures—if it be an interference, if it be not rather a positive advantage—with the material comforts of every country with which it deals; yet if it be an interference with the industry of those countries, where is the delinquent so great as Britain? You have exported in official value about £133,000,000 of the produce of your industry. You have imported of declared value, about £4,722,000 worth, in the year 1848. The imports of raw materials in that year, to be fabricated by your industry into manufactures, were £48,400,000. The manufactured goods imported were £4,700,000. Is £4,700,000, the amount which was taken for your home consumption—is that the amount which could by any possibility interfere with your domestic industry? No such thing. You must deduct from that £4,700,000 all that you re-export. You cannot doubt the justice of that. Of the cotton goods which you imported from India and Europe the amount was £512,000; but you re-exported a very considerable portion of those goods, no less than £275,000 worth; and this amount must be deducted from the other. Can there be a greater proof of the beneficial influence of free-trade than this? You are making this country the entrepôt for the productions of Europe. By your warehouses and the

facilities which you give to commerce, you are inviting goods to this country, to be deposited for the purpose of being re-exported. In the transit, while they lie here, they interfere with no branch of your industry; but they improve your trade, they circulate your capital, they employ your shipping; and there cannot be a greater advantage than that of making this country the market for the commercial products of other countries. Well, you have had, it is true, great imports of silk; not, however, on account of the natural alternations of trade, but on account of the distress in France, which led to a desire to realize whatever could be gained. With respect to silk, and other articles, I may say, generally, that the unnatural and unexpected imports are to be attributed to the depression of trade, and the paralyzation of industry in other countries. But against the silk which you imported is to be set off no less than £870,000 which you exported; and therefore in the case of the imports of silk, when you are testing the quantity, you must deduct, in the first instance, all that you have exported in the course of your commercial operations. But there is another deduction which you must make—a still more material one. You must make a deduction from legitimate imports of all that would have been imported by smuggling if you had chosen to have high duties. If you had retained duties of 40 or 50 per cent., no doubt nominally and apparently your imports would have been greatly reduced. Manufacturers might possibly then have consoled themselves with the thought, that at any rate, there had been only one-fifth or one-sixth of the articles imported. Nothing could, however, have been more delusive than that impression. The smuggler would have corrected the absurdities of your commercial system, and would have pocketed the gain which you hoped to derive from it.”

The right honourable baronet then proceeded to show the

groundlessness of the fears expressed, and of a statement made by Mr. Muntz, the member for Birmingham, with regard to the competition of the Germans with the Birmingham manufacturers; proving at the same time, that the whole exportation of hardware and other metal goods, was universally superior in quantity and quality to the importation. Quoting a parliamentary document, he said: "I find that in 1846, 1847, and 1848, the aggregate average amount of all of these things imported into England from Germany and every other foreign country, was £102,000, being £34,000 on the average of the last three years. To be sure, if we had exported only to the amount of £20,000, that might be a proof that our manufactures were greatly interfered with, and that it was impossible for us to contend with rival manufactures in neutral countries. The total aggregate amount of the imports in the three years was £102,000, while the total aggregate amount of the exports was £13,000,000. The yearly comparison is, on the average, £4,420,000 of brass and copper goods exported, and £34,000 imported. Well, now, what do foreigners think of us when we are denouncing these unfortunates; who, with not half our skill, half our capital, half our manufacturing invention, are sending us in the course of a year £34,000 worth of goods; what will they think, I ask, of our denouncing them as interlopers and interferers with their industry; when they hear that we have, at the same time, no scruple in sending out to them £4,420,000 worth of goods, thereby paralyzing their industry and interfering with their domestic manufactures? What a grasping exacting people must they think us! Now, will you tell me how it is possible that the tariffs, the free import of raw materials, and such an import of manufactured goods as that which I have described; will you tell me how it is possible that the manufacturing distress of this country can justly be attributed to changes

made in the tariff either in the years 1842, 1845, or 1846? That, sir, is my answer to that part of the speech of the honourable gentleman, which attributes the misfortunes of this country to our having attempted to contend by free imports with hostile tariffs.

“ I come now to the second ground, upon which the honourable gentleman has impeached our commercial policy. The honourable gentleman said : I think that the average official value of the exports in the years 1845 and 1846 was £133,000,000; that the average of the declared value in those two years was £59,500,000; that, in 1848, the official value, which signifies quantities, did not fall short of the official value in 1845 and 1846, but that the declared value in 1848 fell off to the extent of £6,500,000, amounting only to £53,000,000, from which the honourable gentleman draws this inference, that the working classes received in 1848 £6,500,000 less than they had received before. Then he instituted a comparison between four months of the year 1849 and four months of the year 1848. The honourable gentleman said, ‘ There is a depreciation of cotton goods exported, comparing 1849 with 1848, to the amount of £646,000; therefore the English workman has been obliged to receive for his labour £646,000 less than he did last year.’ Now, I totally deny the correctness of the inference thus drawn. I deny that, because there was a falling off in the declared value of the exports in 1848, as compared with the average of 1845 and 1846, to the amount of £6,500,000.— I totally deny that therefore the working classes received, in 1848, £6,500,000 less for their labour. It would be melancholy indeed, if that were the case. My consolation is, that nothing of the kind is the fact. Now, first let me observe, that nothing can be more fallacious than any inference drawn from the falling off in the declared value of our manufactures. Let me remark, that all the arguments based



on the official value are, from the way in which the accounts are prepared, (the honourable gentleman knows this as well as any one,) exceedingly fallacious. Take the cotton value. The official value is, in that case, an aggregate of quantity. It has no reference to quality; yet the quality of the goods exported will make the utmost difference in respect of the real value. If you argue that, because the declared value of the manufactures of this country at a given time, has fallen short of the declared value at another time, there has been a falling off in the actual value, I will prove to you that this country ought to have been long since completely and utterly ruined. It would be a most remarkable consequence if, when you reduce the price of food; when you introduce machinery, and reduce the price of raw materials, not of cotton only, but of all those articles which enter into manufactures—it would be a most wonderful thing if there were not a falling off in the declared value!

“The honourable gentleman was not in parliament at an early period of the controversy which arose upon this point. The honourable gentleman said, at the conclusion of his very able speech, quoting, if I recollect rightly, from Cicero, ‘*Nunc quidem novo quodam morbo civitas moritur.*’ Now, I want to show you that this is an old disease. I want to prove to you that it is a disease which has at former periods afflicted this country, and that too under a more aggravated form than it does at present. The doctrine which infested the life of Alderman Waithman, and which he carried with him to his grave, was—that there having been a vast diminution in the declared value of articles of export, the country was rapidly consuming its strength, and approaching extinction! This was the argument of Alderman Waithman. He said, ‘The government forgot that every branch of our trade was the child of protection; the country was struggling with difficulties; there were 3,000,000 of quarters of corn,

and £2,000,000 in the silk manufacture imported into this country; and if we were assured that the money for all this would come back again, he could tell the House that no such thing would be the case, for, whatever we might import, our exports would not be found to increase in consequence.' 'In the course of the last twelve years there had,' he said, been a loss of £120,000,000 in the export trade.' He proved it by means of a paper which I hold in my hand, and which shows how grievous the disorder was at that time. He took the exports. Now, observe, this was in the time of protection, before the House interfered with any of the exports of British manufactures—he took the exports from 1814 to 1828, and compared the official, or declared value, with the real value. He divided the exports between two periods—the first extending from 1814 to 1820, and the second from 1820 to 1828. In the first period the excess of official, or declared, over real value, was, he calculated, £41,520,000; in the second period the excess of official, or declared, over real value, was £83,240,000; and he drew this conclusion, that the total amount of depreciation in the value of the articles was £124,760,000. He said the depreciation of value was £28,000,000 in £40,000,000, or 60 per cent.; the country was therefore, in his opinion, being ruined. It was carrying on a most disadvantageous trade—a few years only could elapse before it would be overwhelmed in bankruptcy and ruin. That was Alderman Waitlman's argument. Now, does not this suggest a doubt whether the honourable gentleman's (Mr. Disraeli's) argument be right? I admit that the two periods are in many respects very different. But, still, what have we been labouring to do? To reduce the price, not of cotton merely, but of palm oil and of everything which enters into manufactures. What is the natural result? To diminish the cost of production. But it does not at all follow, that the amount of wages is

reduced; it does not follow, that because the declared value is at one period less than at another, you lose to the extent of £646,000. I say, it is a totally erroneous conclusion, that a loss to that amount has been sustained. [Mr. D'Israeli was here understood to make some observation in a subdued tone.] I wish to take the words of the honourable gentleman himself:—‘There is a depreciation of cotton goods exported, comparing 1849 with 1848, of £646,000. Therefore, the English workman has been obliged to receive for his labour £646,000 less than he did before.’ That is what I understood the honourable gentleman to say; and what I say in reply is, that the inference is totally erroneous, that, because there has been a diminution in the declared value, a loss has fallen upon the labourer. I can hardly believe that the labourer has been a sufferer. I will give you another proof of the fallacy of the conclusions drawn from diminution of the declared value of your manufactures. In the year 1815, the quantity of yards of wove cotton goods manufactured in, and exported from this country, was 252,000,000. Of these, the declared value, as it appears in the accounts, was £18,158,000. In the year 1845, you exported, of the same goods, 1,091,000,000 of yards. The declared value was, in the two cases, exactly the same; that is to say, 100 yards of calico being worth 18s. in 1815—in 1845, 400 yards were worth exactly the same. Can you contend, on that account, that the labourer, who produced this additional quantity, had his wages reduced or his comforts diminished? The honourable gentleman says that this loss has fallen mainly on the labourer; and he draws the most melancholy inferences with respect to the future condition of the country.

“Now I wish to follow the advice of the noble lord (Lord March) by relying as much as possible on official documents; but when we are discussing the state of the country, we may, in imitation of the right honourable gentleman, the Chancellor of

the Exchequer, refer to recent information from those parts of the country from which it is usually obtained, upon the credibility of which we can fully rely. Well, now, I will take accounts which I have received on this point from three different parts of this country. I will take towns which I think fairly represent the manufacturing interests. I will first take Chippenham; then Nottingham, as representing the central part of England; and then Dundee, as representing Scotland. This is the account from Chippenham, dated June 30: 'In the six months ending this day, we have paid to the same number of people 25 per cent. more in wages than in the corresponding period of 1847, and fully 20 per cent. more than in 1848, and I believe the people in this place, generally, are better fed, better clothed, and in every way more comfortable, than they have been for years. The general trade of the town is in a very flourishing state. The poor rates are about three farthings in the pound. . . . The west of England cloth-trade, is unquestionably better than it has been for years. I have reason to know, that in the town of Trowbridge more goods have been made and sold within the last six or nine months, and a larger amount of wages paid, than were ever before known; and this I believe is the case in the whole of the west of England.' In the west of England, and in other clothing districts, there is one complaint. What do you suppose that complaint is? That they do not get a sufficient quantity of foreign wool. We reduced the duty on foreign wool. It was said that that reduction of duty would interfere with the domestic produce; that it would depreciate the value of the wool grown at home. There is now no such complaint. The want is, more wool, more foreign wool; the more foreign wool, the more domestic employment. The letter from Nottingham states: 'In the hosiery trade of Leicester and of Nottingham, an advance of wages has already taken place; a second advance



is demanded by the workmen ; one-fourth of the workmen in Nottingham have now struck for this second advance ; and in my experience,' the writer observes, ' I never found workmen striking for an advance of wages, but in times when they are in tolerable circumstances and in full work. Since May 1848, the price of clothes and the price of food has been lower than for many years past, and all parties have been well off ; there are no mills on short time, but all in full work ; the silk manufacturers who spin silk for the trade, cannot supply the demand, and the lace-trade is extremely brisk, especially in black articles.' The letter from Dundee says, ' At no period, for several years past, have the workmen in this district been so fully and profitably employed, as now ; we have every reason to consider trade prosperous here, and every hope that it will continue to prosper and to improve for some time to come. There is a very great demand for labour in the mills, and provisions and all other necessities are exceedingly cheap — potatoes and butcher's meat excepted, the former of which are always scarce and dear at this time of the year, and the latter of which is at no time made much use of by our labouring population. The condition of the working classes, in our manufacturing districts generally, I consider at this time to be most satisfactory.' Sir, I have quoted these letters for the purpose of showing, that, though there may have been reductions in the declared value of our manufactures, it does not on that account at all necessarily follow that the condition of the manufacturing population is deteriorated ; and I think I have given conclusive proof, from this exhibited condition of the manufacturing population in three manufacturing towns, separated by great intervals, and carrying on very different branches of manufacture, that the condition of the manufacturing operatives, so far from being worse, is better than it has been for many years. These, then, were the main

grounds on which the honourable gentleman impeached the commercial policy which has been pursued by us of late years. I submit to the House, that the charges so brought against that commercial policy have not been sustained by a rigid examination of the arguments upon which those charges were based. The House, I hope, will appreciate the natural interest I must take in this subject, and will bear in mind—what I myself remember without asperity—that I have upon this subject been exposed to a great deal of misrepresentation.”

Sir Robert then proceeded to quote largely from the statistics of pauperism, and proved that the cheapness of provisions, consequent upon the repeal of the corn laws, had sensibly diminished the burden, not only by providing employment to the people in manufactures, but in reducing the cost of maintenance of aged and infirm paupers.

“I say then, that the honourable gentleman’s argument from the increase of the poor-rate is not conclusive. I draw from it the exactly opposite conclusion, that if low prices, continued for any number of years, capable of affording a test, the increased demand for labour in all the manufacturing districts would raise and not lower wages, and improve the condition of the people; and I say that the position of the honourable gentleman that our poor-rates will increase as the price of provisions fall, is an argument that rests upon no solid foundation. I say, then, that his impeachment of the policy of the last five years has entirely failed.

“I come now to consider the merits of the principle which he desires to substitute; and I believe that we are here discussing by far the most important question which can be submitted to the consideration of parliament—the principle, namely, which shall govern our economic and commercial legislation. Government may make blunders in

details, which may be corrected, but an error in the principles which are to direct our commercial legislation is a fatal error. Yes, I say this is a most vital question. I say, that unless our domestic industry be promoted and encouraged, we cannot hope for peace, comfort, or prosperity. The question which we have to discuss, and which can only be effectually discussed in a friendly spirit among us, is, how this great object can be best effectuated? We should greatly underrate the importance of this question, if we regarded it as merely a question of revenue. It is a question which affects our comfort and our social progress—meaning by social progress, a progress in morality, in the enjoyments of life, in refinement of taste, in civilization. All these things should be, at the very least, equally the objects of our consideration with the increase of the revenue. Proposals have been made, doctrines have been propounded, by gentlemen of great ability, and supported by a powerful party, whom, whatever the causes of my secession from them, I shall never cease to regard with sentiments of respect, as men of high talent, of high honour, as men actuated by no interested motives, but solely by a desire to promote the welfare of the people. Plans have, I say, been propounded by the chiefs of this party, and supported with great zeal and ability, which are to be practically carried into execution, should the success of this motion render its supporters the successors of the noble lord opposite. I will take the doctrines of this party, in the first place, as enunciated by Lord Stanley. That nobleman, on the first of February last, said: ‘I am not favourable to prohibitory duties, but I consider it necessary to give to our fellow-countrymen the amount of protection requisite to counterbalance the disadvantages which arise from the admission of foreign produce: we must, I say, return to the principle of protection. Foremost among the measures which we believe to be essential to the prosperity

of this country, is the recognition of the principle that legislative encouragement ought to be given to every branch of domestic industry.' The same doctrine is put forward by the honourable member for Northampton, who declares that we can only encounter hostile tariffs with countervailing impediments. Now, this principle of protection to domestic industry, by which is meant legislative encouragement for the purpose of protection and not of revenue, I regard as a wholly vicious principle; the assumption that hostile tariffs can only be met by tariffs equally hostile, I deny, and assert, on the contrary, that the true policy is to combat hostile tariffs with free imports. Will you answer this argument? Surely the capital of a country is the fund from which its industry is supported. Surely the industry of a country is in proportion to its capital. The augmentation of the capital of a country must necessarily depend upon the amount of its savings. If you choose to give more money for your domestic produce than you could obtain the same articles for from foreign countries, is not that a diminution of your capital to the extent of the surplus price of home produce? If you say you would extend protection over all the articles of your home production, so I assert you diminish in proportion the fund from which your capital is augmented, and your native industry promoted. And I contend that every shilling that you give for your home produce above what you could obtain foreign produce for, so far from being a protection to your native industry, is an interference with the augmentation of your capital, and a diminution of the fund out of which you pay your home labour. I believe that the laws which regulate the commercial intercourse between nations, are precisely the same in principle as those which govern the intercourse of individuals. The same law which governs the planetary movements occasions the fall of an apple; and in like manner the intercourse of private



individuals is regulated upon the identical principles which govern the transactions of nations ; and we only mystify and darken the subject by not always looking upon it in this point of view."

Sir Robert Peel then quoted the opinions of Adam Smith, Hume, Say, and others, upon the doctrine of buying in the cheapest, and selling in the dearest market ; and continued :

"But there are others besides the philosophers whose names and authority I have cited, who have held the same views with respect to trade. When this country was suffering from an unusual depression in its trade and commerce, the bankers and merchants petitioned this House, and that petition was, I find, signed, and its doctrines sanctioned, by the honoured name of Alexander Baring. I find in that petition the following distinct and explicit statement—'That the maxim of buying in the cheapest market and selling in the dearest, which regulates every merchant in his individual dealings, is strictly applicable as the best rule for the trade of the whole nation.' So that we here find the first and the most distinguished merchant in the whole world enunciating the doctrine which is now exclusively attributed to the philosophers of the Manchester school. The petition goes on to say :—'That although the particular description of production which could not stand against unrestrained foreign competition would be discouraged ; yet as no importation could be continued for any length of time with a corresponding exportation, direct or indirect, there would be an encouragement, for the purpose of that exportation, of some other production to which our situation might be better suited ; thus affording at least an equal, and probably a greater, and certainly a more beneficial employment, to our own capital and labour ; that of the numerous protective and prohibitory duties of our commercial code, it may be proved, that while all operate as a heavy tax on the com-

munity at large, very few are of any ultimate benefit to the classes in whose favour they were originally instituted, and none to the extent of the loss occasioned by them to other classes; that among the other evils of the restrictive or protective system, not the least is, that the artificial protection of one branch of industry, or source of production, against foreign competition, is set up as a ground of claim by other branches for similar protection; so that if the reasoning upon which these restrictive or prohibitory regulations are founded were followed out consistently, it would not stop short of excluding us from all foreign commerce whatsoever.' And these bankers and merchants conclude by saying:—

“‘That nothing would more tend to counteract the commercial hostility of foreign states than the adoption of a more enlightened and more conciliatory policy on the part of this country; that although, as a matter of mere diplomacy, it may sometimes answer to hold out the removal of particular prohibitions or high duties, as depending upon corresponding concessions by other states in our favour, it does not follow that we should maintain our restrictions in cases where the desired concessions on their part cannot be obtained; our restrictions would not be the less prejudicial to our own capital and industry, because other governments persisted in preserving impolitic regulations; that upon the whole the most liberal would prove to be the most politic course on such occasions; that, independent of the direct benefit to be derived by this country on every occasion of such concession or relaxation, a great incidental object would be gained by the recognition of a sound principle or standard, to which all subsequent arrangements might be referred, and by the salutary influence which a promulgation of such just views by the legislature and by the nation at large, could not fail to have on the policy of other states.’

“This petition was presented in 1820, by the late Lord

Ashburton, then Mr. Alexander Baring, and its statements, and the views set forth in it, were enforced by that distinguished man, with all the ability and sagacity, which so eminently characterized him. (Some honourable member exclaimed, 'It was after the Currency bill of 1819.') Well, whatever might have been the cause of the suffering, the merchants and bankers of London were of opinion, in the year 1820, that free-trade was the true remedy for their sufferings. The honourable gentleman who brought forward this motion says, that we cannot fight hostile tariffs by means of free-trade, and that the only means of meeting foreign countries on their own ground is by countervailing duties on their produce. Now, let us apply this doctrine to the three great commercial countries from whom we draw our chief supplies—namely, the United States, France, and Russia. The United States impose heavy prohibitory duties on our cotton manufactures, and still England is able, owing to her superiority in machinery and capital, to compete with the United States in their own market. The duty on our cotton goods there is 20 per cent. ad valorem; and what are we called upon to do, according to the doctrines of the honourable member? Are we to impose a high duty on the raw cotton we receive from the United States? What good would a high duty do to our cotton manufacturers? They can beat the United States in neutral markets, though not in their own; and what class in this country would derive any benefit from a high duty on raw cotton? I assert that you are far better able to compete with the hostile tariff of the United States, in neutral markets, by buying the raw material at the cheapest possible rate, than you would be by imposing a countervailing duty on this material, in order to retaliate the prohibitory duty of 20 per cent. imposed on our cotton manufactures. Take France as another instance of the

fallacy of this sort of reasoning. She won't receive our hardwares nor our cotton manufactures. How, then, are we to deal with her? Are we to impose a high duty on her wines? If you do so, you revert back to the principles of the Methuen treaty, which I thought had been exploded and repudiated by every statesman in this House, when the wine duties were equalized. That treaty was based on the ground that because Portugal consented to take English woollens, we consented to admit her wines at a lower rate of duty than those of France. Well, I certainly did think that the doctrines upon which this treaty was based had been exploded. However, to proceed with my illustration. In the year 1845 we reduced the duty on French brandy from 22s. 6d. a gallon to 15s. What has been the consequence? Have we suffered in any degree from that change? Has the advantage been gained by France alone? If, instead of reducing we had augmented the duty, we should have had to pay dearer for our brandy, and we should have gained nothing in any other way; whereas by reducing the duty on brandy without insisting upon an equivalent, you have got your brandy at a less price by the whole of the difference in the duty. Well, then, has the revenue suffered in consequence of this reduction? Let us see. In the year 1845, when the duty was 22s. 6d. a gallon, the amount received was £1,208,000 on French brandy. In the year 1848 the duty being 15s., the revenue derived from brandy was £1,206,000. So that there is little or no reduction in the revenue, whilst there has been a vast increase on the import, a corresponding decrease in smuggling, and no corresponding evils to be complained of. What, therefore, could we possibly have gained by fighting the French duties on our hardware and cottons, by a hostile tariff on our side? Well, now I come to Russia. We are dissatisfied with the restrictions which she imposes on our productions. Would it be any advan-



tage to us to raise the duty imposed on the tallow, hemp, and other raw produce which we receive from Russia? For my own part, I can see no advantage in imposing countervailing duties on these articles of consumption. I therefore, without the slightest reservation, do not hesitate to say that the noble lord was wrong when he said that he would extend protection to all the articles of domestic produce. By so doing he would only be widening the circle of injury to the consumers of this country; and I most emphatically deny to the honourable gentleman the smallest ground for his policy of meeting hostile tariffs by countervailing duties. I believe that the attempt to return to the reciprocity system, would be attended with the greatest danger, and, moreover, that it would be accompanied by such difficulties as to render it absolutely impossible; and it is on these grounds that I differ from, and shall offer my strenuous opposition to a motion, the effect of which, if carried, would be to displace the noble lord, and to place the honourable member (Mr. Disraeli) and his adherents on the opposite benches.

“I apprehend the real meaning of the motion now before the House—or, at least, one of the immediate consequences of its being affirmed—to be the re-imposition of protective duties on the food of the people. Now, it is with the most solemn conviction of the truth of what I am asserting, that I state it to be my belief, and my firm conviction, that any more fatal boon could not be conferred upon the agriculturists than such protection as the honourable member contemplates.

“Sir, as in 1842, when the duties were remitted, and the prohibition was removed from foreign cattle, it turned out that the alarm was unfounded, so I trust now, whilst not denying the distress—deeply lamenting its existence—that there is an undue depression and apprehension on the part of the farmers. I entreat you to consider whether it is not

possible that the importation of foreign corn into this country, may have been governed by other considerations than those of the natural course of trade. I entreat you to consider whether or not there have been great losses in the corn trade and in the importation of corn, which may operate as a warning to the importers of corn in future, and that the price may have been unduly depreciated, independently of all considerations of free-trade. It is of course difficult to speak of the future. My opinion is, however, that that is the case; and I entreat you also to consider this, that you never could, in the present state of public opinion, have maintained a law which would give you a guaranty of high prices to the injury of the people at large.

“My belief is, that a wiser decision than that to which you came,—to subject property to direct taxation within certain limits, to remove the prohibitions from meat and cattle, to permit swine and oxen to be imported, to reduce the duty on corn, bacon, lard, butter, and cheese,—could not have been adopted. My belief is, that it was a most advisable measure, and that you have been amply repaid for any loss you may have sustained by that reduction. My belief is, that you have gained the confidence and good will of a powerful class in this country, by parting with that which was thought to be directly for the benefit of the landed interest. I think it was that confidence in the generosity and justice of parliament which in no small degree enabled you to pass triumphantly through the storm which convulsed other countries during the year 1848. I think if, in 1842, you had not made these reductions, and you had not subjected property to direct taxation, and relieved the labouring classes from those manifold impositions to which their subsistence was subjected, that you might possibly have ridden through the storm—such is the strength of your institutions—but not with the satisfaction of thinking

that you had the cordial support and confidence and goodwill in the hour of trial of those who depend on labour for the wages of subsistence.

“You thought that the metropolis presented a magnificent spectacle, and so it did, when some 150,000 men of the middle class were ranged in support of the authorities, when there was no disaffection, when there was a determination, without reference to party differences, to preserve the peace of this country, and to put down the threats and menaces of the ill-disposed. But my belief is, that this metropolis exhibits an incomplete—an imperfect example of the advantage you derived from that confidence and support. You must go to the great lives of manufacturing industry. Go to the mines—go to those who are not subjected to the influences which tell in the metropolis in favour of the authorities. Go to Paisley, to Glasgow, to Stockport, to Manchester; go to the iron district, and there see the order that was preserved in February, 1848. See again, when the manufacturing interests were deeply suffering—when there was the loss of employment, when there were great privations—see the patience and resignation with which those sufferings were borne, and so borne because it was felt that human legislation was not responsible for the calamities of the time. I will not take London, then, as an example of the order and the determination to maintain the institutions, which then pervaded this country. I look at the report which was made by the police officers. I wanted to see how a population behaved which I remembered to have been moved from its foundations in 1818; which at various intervening periods had been subjected to the arts of the seditious and disaffected; and who with difficulty had resisted, in times of great suffering, the snares and temptations that were held out to them. I wanted to know what course they had taken in 1848; with the example of Irish

disaffection before them, with the example of the French revolution, of anarchy triumphant, and thrones shaken to their foundations; and I find from an account published by a police officer, dated so recently as the 19th of April, of the present year, that much as the town of Manchester was indebted to the energetic measures of the mayor, and the active co-operation of the citizens, the borough owed still more to the working-classes, and mill-operatives, for the maintenance of order, for their express disapproval of, and absence of sympathy with, the proceedings of the few disorderly and disaffected. Well, surely those are significant lessons—surely those are decisive proofs that the policy you adopted in remitting the duties on articles of subsistence was a wise policy. It was not the act of a sagacious minister; the great coming crisis was not foreseen; my belief is, that it pleased Almighty God to listen to your prayers to turn scarcity and dearth into cheapness and plenty, ‘so to direct and prosper your consultations’ on the brink of a great precipice,—on the coming of a tremendous calamity,—as to establish peace and happiness on the foundations of truth and justice. You have reaped the reward of that policy. You have passed unscathed during the severest trial to which the institutions of any nation were ever exposed. You stood erect amid the convulsions around you; and are you now to have proposals made to you of some paltry fixed duty? Take your 5s. duty, and consider what it is. If it be 5s., it will give you 5s. on wheat, 2s. 6d. on barley, and 2s. on oats; 1s. 6d. more than you have at present on barley, and 1s. more than you have on oats. It is an equivocal advantage at the best. But by every consideration which can influence rational and reflecting legislators, by the highest suggestions of a generous policy, by the coldest calculations of the lowest and most selfish prudence, I implore you to reject this proffered boon—and not to sacrifice



—not to barter the glorious heritage which you have obtained by your sagacious and most timely policy, for the smallest consideration which ever was proposed to man, since the days of him who sold his birthright for a mess of pottage.”

This able, statesmanlike, comprehensive, and convincing speech, occupied two hours and a half in the delivery. It fairly disposed of the question, and left the Protectionists without a reply. Lord John Russell very briefly ridiculed Mr. D’Israeli’s “Iliad of Woes,” and Mr. Herries’ “juvenile ardour,” in coming forward before he had received the seals of office, with a proposal for a moderate fixed duty on corn: but the speech of Sir Robert Peel had done the work, and his lordship’s speech, able as it was, was scarcely necessary. On a division, the government had a majority of 140; 156 voting for Mr. D’Israeli’s motion, and 296 against it.

On the 1st of August, the Queen having already started on a tour to Ireland and Scotland, parliament was prorogued by commission. The royal speech referred especially to the bill to amend the Navigation Laws, as a subject for congratulation, “in full confidence that the enterprize, skill, and hardihood of her people would assure them a full share of the commerce of the world, and maintain upon the seas the ancient renown of this nation.”

## CHAPTER XX.

SIR ROBERT PEEL AT THE MANSION HOUSE—VISIT TO THE  
HIGHLANDS—LETTER TO HIS TENANTRY.

ON the 27th of June the Lord Mayor, Sir James Duke, gave a state dinner at the Mansion House to Sir Robert Peel, and a distinguished circle of noblemen and gentlemen, of that party who were generally favourable to his policy. The party numbered about two hundred, including several distinguished ladies, and, among others, Lady and Miss Peel. This banquet was remarkable for the feeling manner in which Sir Robert Peel vindicated his own character for honesty of purpose, from aspersions which had been thrown upon it, and for the cordiality with which he rendered justice to the attached friends and eminent statesmen with whom he had been associated during his political life.

The Lord Mayor, in proposing the health of the right honourable Baronet, referred in succession to all the great measures of the preceding thirty years, with every one of which his name was honourably associated:—the Currency; the Amendment of the Criminal Law; the Catholic Relief bill; the Reform of the Tariff; the Repeal of the Corn Laws; and lastly, the important subject of the Permanent Amelioration of the Condition of Ireland. His lordship concluded by stating, “that the right honourable Baronet had made great sacrifices for what he considered his public duty, but no one could say that he had carved out anything for himself or his friends. With a unity of principle and a disinterestedness of character most remarkable, the right hon-

ourable Baronet had, against all obstacles, carried out that which he believed to be for the good of his country and the honour of his sovereign."

The toast having been drunk with great enthusiasm, Sir Robert Peel returned thanks in a speech, which was frequently interrupted by the cheers of the assembly.

"My Lord Mayor," he said, "you can hardly expect me, after the reference you have made to the public acts of the administration with which I have been connected, to suppress the feelings which rise in my mind when I look around me, and see those whom you have done me the honour of associating with me on this occasion. I see many here who were not connected with the government over which I presided, but who were nevertheless prepared to make, and who did make, the greatest personal sacrifices, to give their free support to that government from the purest and most disinterested motives, even when they knew and felt assured that its days were numbered. I cannot meet them at this table, without placing on record my admiration of the principles which guided their conduct. Still less when I see around me those who were associated with me in the execution of public duty, who were bound with me by the ties of a common responsibility, and still more closely bound with me by the ties of unvarying reciprocal attachment, reciprocal esteem, and reciprocal support; when I see around me those who gave me their professional assistance as men of the highest eminence at the bar—when I see those with whom I conferred on questions of the deepest interest connected with the commercial and colonial policy of this country—when I see the minister with whom I was in daily communication on the internal affairs of this country, and who brought to the performance of his duty the highest talent, the greatest wisdom, and the most consummate skill in the administration of his department (Sir James Graham)—when I see

my right honourable friend, to whom more especially the charge of the finances of the country devolved (Mr. Goulburn)—one with whom I made my earliest political friendship, and with whom I have shared every vicissitude of political fortune, and who, by his financial ability and his judgment, conciliated the respect of this great city, and in whose integrity the most unbounded confidence was always felt, and whose administration of the finances of the country was as eminently successful as that of any Chancellor of the Exchequer that ever held the office—when I see on my right hand my noble friend, who was charged in the most critical times with the administration of the foreign affairs of this country (Lord Aberdeen)—who while in office gained the confidence and good-will of every foreign minister with whom he had to enter into communication, and who gained for the councils of his sovereign, in foreign affairs, an influence never surpassed, and which was mainly due to his own personal conduct and character, and who invariably made the influence he possessed subservient to that which was the great end of his political life—the removal of all obstacles which prevented a good and cordial understanding between this country and foreign powers, and the maintenance of universal peace consistently with the most scrupulous and undeviating regard to the interests and honour of his own country; when I look on those around me, I cannot hear you, my lord, give me so much of credit for the acts of the administration over which it was my lot to preside, without acknowledging, as I now deliberately do, that I believe no man who ever stood in the situation in which I stood as first minister of the crown, had the same advantages in the zealous, the faithful, and the cordial support of those who were united with him in his duty, as I had. We had our differences of opinion, no doubt, and we expressed those differences, as it was our duty to do—but this I can say



with truth, that they never, for a moment, interrupted the harmony of private friendship ; and when the decision was taken, the difference that had existed never interfered with the direct and earnest execution of that which was decided upon. I am bound, therefore, to admit, that whatsoever may have been my influence in public affairs, so far as feeling is concerned, my gratitude is due to those with whom I was associated ; and I may add, that my respect for their probity, my attachment to them as private friends, has only gained strength by the interval which has elapsed since I resigned office. But you, my Lord Mayor, have alluded to a much earlier period of my connexion with the service of the crown. It is now forty years since my parliamentary career commenced, and my lot has been cast during a most important and eventful period of the history of the country. I look back on that which has passed during that eventful time with mixed feelings of satisfaction and regret — of regret, because, with scarcely an exception, the tide of time has swept away every one who then occupied the chief posts in the government—almost all those great minds that were then swaying the destinies of empires, or commanding the applause of listening senators. It has pleased God, indeed, to spare to us one illustrious man. He remains,

Like a great sea-mark, standing every flaw,  
And saving those that eye it !

“ I entered public life when Spain was occupied by the French army—by no less than 360,000 French soldiers, when, after the battle of Talavera, the Duke of Wellington retired from Spain, and withdrew a force of 30,000 British within the lines of Torres Vedras. There was great disgrace and great depression felt in consequence, and it was prophesied that the British army must evacuate the Peninsula, and a proclamation was issued, that the Emperor Napoleon would, himself, take the command in Spain, and that his crossing the

Pyrennees would be the signal for the British leopard to rush into the sea, to escape death or disgrace. Preparations were made to withdraw from the lines of Torres Vedras, if necessary—but there was one man who never saw the need, and who, aided by the noble marquis near me (Londonderry,) and the other martial spirits of the time, advanced from those lines; and the British leopard never paused in its career until the British standard was floating on the walls of Paris, and the independence of Europe was won by the gallantry and intrepidity of the Duke of Wellington. He, thank God, is still spared to us. And I am sure I only echo the universal sentiment when I say—may he long live to enjoy the respect of a grateful people, and may the country long witness the lustre of his declining years, when his wisdom in the senate is scarcely eclipsed by the meridian splendour of his early days in the field! During the whole period I held office, I had the advantage also of the assistance of that noble duke, and I cannot express in terms sufficiently warm and emphatic, my sense of the great advantages which, in civil life, the country has derived from his sagacious counsels. Having said so much, my lord,—to none of those other subjects to which you have adverted, with one exception only, shall I refer;—but there is one subject of which I may speak without the chance of giving offence to any one, or evoking the slightest feeling of party—that one subject is Ireland. Men of all parties and all political connexions are now feeling the deepest sympathy with the misfortunes of that unhappy country, and feeling the most sincere desire to administer to her present wants, and to lay the foundation for her future prosperity. If the city of London can co-operate in this great object, it will confer on itself a credit, which is already justly its due, from its past connexion with the history of that country. It is now almost two hundred and forty years since a sovereign of this country, desirous to

make a settlement in Ireland, sought the assistance of the city of London, and invited their co-operation in restoring what were then called, the ruined cities of Londonderry and Coleraine ; and if there be any authority which has reason to look back on its connexion with Ireland without remorse, it is the city of London, which has done more than parliament or proprietors to promote the interests of that country, and, forgetting temporary gain or present interest, has sought a compensation for such sacrifices in the permanent welfare of the district with which it is connected. I hope, after the lapse of two hundred and forty years, the city of London may be again able to assist in promoting the welfare of Ireland. If so, it will act now on new, on more liberal and more comprehensive principles. It will not seek, as it used to do, to expel the natives from the soil, but will rather seek to elevate their character, to encourage their industry, and find permanent employment for them, and instil into their minds the principle of order, of respect for the laws, and submission to the constituted authorities. I hope such a plan may succeed, and that it may receive from the government the encouragement which is necessary. The boundaries of the city are necessarily limited, its jurisdiction cannot be extended ; but if by a useful connexion with Ireland it can encourage, in the remote districts, habits of industry and self-support, it will endear the English name to the people of that country, and do more to cement the union than any legislation. It is my deep obligation to the city of London, my respect for its past course, and my respect for its present chief magistrate, which induce me to say, that I hope, under his auspices, this charitable work may be undertaken, and that it may please God to prosper it, and to lay the foundation for the future peace and prosperity of that country."

Sir Robert Peel took advantage of the close of the parliamentary session to pay a long meditated visit to the High-

lands of Scotland—a part of the country to which her Majesty and the Prince Consort had lately attracted more than usual attention by the regularity of their autumnal sojourns among its magnificent hills. Sir Robert Peel, like all men of a cultivated taste and intellect, however much he may have been deficient in imagination, found a genuine pleasure in the contemplation of scenery; and the romantic abode of Eilan Aigas, on the river Beauly in Ross-shire, a few miles from the town of Inverness, was well calculated, by its beautiful seclusion, to administer to his love of nature in some of her wildest, as well as sweetest moods. The hills amid which the Beauly flows at this part of its course, are called in the Gaelic language the “Drhuim,” signifying the “Ridge,” but more commonly pronounced the “Dream,” a mis-pronunciation singularly expressive of the almost visionary and fairy beauty of the region.\*

It was in the quiet seclusion of this lovely scene, that Sir Robert Peel sought temporary repose from political strife;

\* Nowhere in the Highlands is the picturesque beauty of the Drhuim surpassed. The fine river-course is here lined by beetling precipices—there by wooded slopes. The road runs, now high along declivities, sinking steep to the water’s edge in all the graces of weeping birch, shooting from their sides, and clothing with their airy, rounded forms the heights above, and fringing the sky-line overhead—again conducting by sweet narrow cultivated haughs. The eye now scans the merits of particular trees and sections of the road—now of a reach of the river and its waterfalls, walled by rocks, and surmounted by waving woods—then roams over a circling expanse of very gentle slopes, wooded and cultivated to their summits, the stream gracefully curving away before us, its channel broken by spiral rocks, and richly flanked with varied foliage. At the further end of the Drhuim, the road begins to ascend towards the interior of the country; and here the river is seen pouring down on each side of a high, rounded hill, covered with oak and birch, at the lower extremity of which it forms the second set of small but beautiful cataracts. This wooded hill is the island of Aigas—for the river parts into two, and encircles it—noted as having been the temporary retreat to which Simon Lord Lovat conducted the dowager Lady Lovat, (whom he had forced to become his wife,) when letters of fire-and-sword were issued against him and the principal families of his clan, by King William, in 1697.—*Anderson’s Guide to the Highlands.*



but even here he was not free from the grateful, if importunate, admiration of his neighbours. Civic honours, scarcely less gratifying than those awarded him in the metropolis, awaited him in the North. In the month of October, being on a visit to the Earl of Aberdeen at Haddo House, the citizens of Aberdeen hastened to invite the right honourable baronet to a *déjeuner* in the town-hall, to receive in person the freedom of the city, which had been unanimously voted to him. The invitation was accepted, and on the 12th of October Sir Robert Peel entered the city in an open carriage, accompanied by the Earl of Aberdeen and Lord Claude Hamilton; and after alighting a few minutes at the Royal hotel, proceeded to the town-hall amidst the cheering of the inhabitants, who had collected in great numbers in the streets for the purpose of greeting him. After the banquet the Lord Provost, (Thompson,) in a brief and complimentary speech, presented the right honourable baronet with the burgess ticket, and the town-clerk (Mr. Angus) invested him with the usual insignia. Sir Robert Peel, amidst much cheering, acknowledged the honour in a brief speech, in which he exhibited a touching proof, that the continual and most unjust attacks of a portion of the Protectionist press, and of some violent Protectionist orators, had somewhat disturbed the usual unclouded serenity of his mind.

"My Lord Provost and Gentlemen," he said, "I wish that I could find terms in which I could adequately express my grateful acknowledgments, not merely for the municipal distinction which you have now conferred on me, but for the most kind and cordial reception which has been given to me on this my first visit to your ancient city. That visit must necessarily be of short duration, but it will leave a lasting impression on my mind. I came to Scotland in a purely private capacity, for the purpose of enjoying the pleasures of seclusion and retirement from the busy scenes of public life,—a

happy oblivion, for a time, of all the subjects and topics of political controversy, and that exciting interest which must ever attend public meetings, even of the most harmonious kind. I came to this part of the country for the purpose of marking my respect for a noble lord, of whom I have been the honoured guest—whose feelings, as he is present, I shall not wound by expressing myself as I could wish to do,—of marking my attachment to him as a private friend, and my obligations to him in the various relations of life in which I have had the honour to be associated with the noble lord; I cannot but here express my gratitude for the valuable services which I received from him as a minister, in carrying out the public business of the country; and thus far I encroach on the domain of public life; but your kindness has compelled me to depart so far from my resolution as to be present on this occasion, that I might receive from this most respectable company, the freedom of the city of Aberdeen. If I remember rightly, when the freedom of this city was conferred on a man of the highest eminence in literature—I mean Dr. Johnson—and I feel it a high honour to be thus associated with such a man,—he said, in speaking of his receiving the freedom of the city, that the honour had been conferred on him ‘with all the decorations which politeness could add.’ After all the feeling that has been manifested towards me, not merely within these walls, but without them, and which I here most gratefully acknowledge, I will add, that you have not only conferred on me the freedom of the city with ‘all the decorations which politeness can add,’ but have enhanced that honour by such expressions of good feeling and generous conduct, as one who is a stranger among you could not have expected to receive. Well, I shall not abuse your generosity. The freedom of your ancient city has been conferred on me by the unanimous vote of the magistrates and council; and

though from this I am not to conclude that every member of that honourable body approves of every act of my public life, yet I receive it as an assurance that you appreciate the motives, although you may not all agree with me in every measure I have felt it to be my duty to recommend to the crown. I take it as an assurance that you believe that I had no other object in view than to advance the public well-being of the country ; and, while I would not disturb the harmony and good feeling of this meeting by introducing anything of a controversial character, I cannot but be conscious of the kindness you have shown, nor fail to receive your appreciation of my motives, as a proof that you disregard and despise the calumnies that have been heaped—(The remainder of the sentence was drowned in cheers.) But I shall not offend any one of you by introducing matters which might lead to difference of opinion; and although you have compelled me to depart from the resolution I had taken, you will excuse me if I make no reference to questions of public controversy. But there is one topic on which there can be no difference of opinion. The provost has stated that I am the youngest burgess. Yes, but I will yield to none—no, not even to ‘the oldest inhabitant’—in an earnest desire that Aberdeen may long preserve the illustrious name which it has borne in the annals of the world ; that it may maintain the high respect which in a double capacity it has gained as the seat of two universities ; that its schools of learning and science may long continue to send forth minds so educated, and so imbued with religion, as to be able to enlarge and improve our social state ; and I trust that this great city, by a free and unrestricted commercial intercourse with other cities and with other nations, by industry and integrity in all its dealings, may, and I doubt not it will, contribute to the enjoyment, the comfort, and the happiness of the world.”

Sir Robert Peel having taken leave of his fellow-citizens in the town-hall, proceeded on foot, and wearing his burgess ticket in his hat, to his hotel, where Lady Peel and some members of his family awaited him. They afterwards left the town amidst every manifestation of respect and esteem.

Sir Robert Peel left Scotland at the close of the autumn, and returned to Tamworth. His activity of mind here displayed itself, as usual, in his intercourse with his neighbours and tenantry, in the exercise of hospitality, and in the composition of his celebrated letter to the tenant-farmers on his estate, in which he broached the question how far their mutual relations had been affected by the repeal of the Corn Laws, and touched slightly upon the modifications which justice and equity might require to be made in the terms of agreement heretofore existing between them. This letter ran as follows :—

*“ To the Tenant-Farmers on the Estate of Sir Robert Peel.*

“ I wish to communicate with you on the present state and the prospects of agriculture, so far as they concern our relations of landlord and tenant; and I know not that I could select any better mode of communication than this which I have adopted.

“ There can, I think, be no question that the effect of the recent changes of the law in respect to the free import of the main articles of subsistence, will be to maintain a range of low prices in average seasons, and to prevent very high prices in seasons of dearth. In other words, their effect will be to ensure, so far as legislation can ensure it, cheapness and abundance of food as the ordinary rule—to diminish the risk of scarcity—and to mitigate the suffering from it, should it unfortunately occur.

“ It is because I believe that this will be the effect of the changes to which I have referred, that I look upon them as



irrevocable, and that I advise you to dismiss altogether from your calculations the prospect of renewed protection.

“It is my firm persuasion that neither the present nor any future parliament will consent to re-impose duties upon the main articles of human food, either for the purpose of protection or of revenue.

“I would at once act upon that persuasion, and proceed to consider in what degree the free import of provisions affects the relation in which we stand to each other, if I did not believe that other causes, less permanent in their operation, have had a material influence upon the present value of agricultural produce. I allude in particular to the general scarcity and high prices which recently prevailed for two or three successive years, not merely in this country, but throughout great part of Europe—to the extraordinary stimulus thus given to production—and the natural consequence of that stimulus—a temporary and undue depression of price.

“I propose, therefore, to defer for a time that general review of the relation in which we stand to each other, which, but for the circumstances to which I have referred, I would at once have undertaken.

“When undertaken, it will be upon principles which I think you will admit to be just. I shall not refer merely to the diminished price of one article or another, but I shall take into the account all the considerations which fairly enter into the question, shall try to estimate the effect of recent legislation and of improved means of conveyance, in reducing not only the price of produce, but the cost of production also—and shall compare the disadvantage to which the tenant-farmer may be exposed from competition with producers in other countries, with the benefit which he may derive, if he has ordinary skill and capital, from the abolition

of duties on many articles, which are, or may be, profitably consumed on a farm.

“I do not undertake to make a general and indiscriminate abatement of rent, but, aided by good advice, I shall consider the special case of each farm, and the circumstances under which it was entered upon; and in the instances in which I shall be satisfied that there is a fair claim for an abatement of rent, I will make it, and make it with much greater pleasure in favour of an old and improving tenant, than in favour of a stranger.

“Although, as I have before observed, I do not consider the present the suitable period for this general review of our position, yet I am prepared without delay to co-operate with you in preparing to meet, not foreign competition only, but that competition with domestic skill and capital, which will be at least as formidable to those farmers who are insensible to the rapid progress of agricultural improvement, and neglect to keep pace with it.

“I have not the presumption to offer you advice as to the practical management of your farms; but I may try to impress upon you this truth, that if there be any of you who produce, on the average, not more than eighteen or twenty bushels of wheat per acre, and if there be other farmers who, in not more favoured positions, and on land of equal quality, produce forty—and if they produce this, not by expensive farming, but by wise economy—by the command of adequate capital—by the application of scientific skill—by the liberal employment of labour—by the saving of every particle of manure, and the restoration to the earth of those elements of fertility which are withdrawn with every crop—I may, I say, without presumption, try to impress upon you this truth, that there is no amount of protection from foreign produce, no abatement of rent, which would enable you to meet the competition of your own countrymen.

“To aid the exertions which are required to encounter successfully that competition, I make to you the following proposals :

“The rent due at Michaelmas last will be payable, according to custom, in the course of a few days. In the case of all those tenants occupying more than ten acres of land, who shall pay the Michaelmas rent, and discharge any former arrears that may be due, I will set apart 20 per cent. of the last half-year's rent, and will forthwith apply the amount, under the general direction of my agent, but in concert with the tenant, in such improvements as may be most beneficial to the farm. I shall give the preference to drainage, to the removal of unnecessary fences, and to the means of preventing the waste of manure. On this expenditure no return will be required from the tenant.

“The same course shall be taken with regard to the half-year's rent which shall be due at Lady-day next.

“If upon any of your farms additional draining should be still requisite, I will execute the work upon the same terms as heretofore ; the tenant drawing the materials, and paying 4 per cent. upon the outlay. As to other permanent improvements, requiring an expenditure which the tenant cannot conveniently meet, but on which he may be willing to pay a reasonable rate of interest (such, for instance, as additional shedding for the feeding of cattle,) I will consider favourably any proposals that may be made to me on that head.

“It is hardly necessary to refer to leases of longer duration than one year, as they are so few in number. In the cases, however, in which they do exist, I will consent to release the tenant from his engagement, on his giving, at the proper period of the present year, the same notice which would be required in the case of yearly tenancies.

“Such tenancies are, as you are well aware, the almost invariable rule in this immediate neighbourhood ; but if any

of you are desirous of expending money on the improvement of your farms, and wish for the additional security of a lease for years, I have no disinclination to grant it, being satisfied as to the skill and capital of the tenant requiring it.

“If you prefer to a lease a written agreement, stipulating for reimbursement on account of unexhausted improvements, on the principle long acted upon in certain districts, I am willing to enter into such agreement.

“It does not occur to me that there are any other points to which it is necessary for me, for the present at least, to refer. I have thought it would be for your advantage that I should fully explain to you my views and intentions with regard to matters so deeply concerning your interests; and I hope I have done so in a spirit becoming the long connection that has subsisted between us, and the friendly intercourse we have always maintained.

“Believe me, with every good wish for your welfare,  
sincerely yours,

ROBERT PEEL.

“Drayton Manor, Dec. 24, 1849.

“P.S. The payment of rent will be made as usual on the 1st and 3rd of January, but as this notice will reach you only a short time previously, I will not exclude from the benefit of it a tenant who may make all payments due by him within the period of one month following.”

This document was extensively published and commented upon in the newspapers throughout the country; to which, with the exception of a few that spoke the sentiments of the ultra-protectionist party, it generally gave satisfaction. It was remarked in the first place that the authoritative manner in which the writer spoke of the Corn Laws as a thing of the past, and of their repeal as irrevocable, was calculated seriously to discourage the reactionist party, who were not yet reconciled to their recent defeat, and still flattered themselves with dreams of a return, one day, to the



pleasant ways of protection and high prices. The practical effect of this seasonable announcement, and of the spirit of the advice which accompanied it, was unquestionably useful, and was generally acknowledged to be so. At the same time, it was remarked by some, that the amount of agricultural knowledge displayed by Sir Robert in matters of detail was not very great; whilst the hesitating and cautious manner in which he postponed, rather than met, the great question involving the future position and responsibilities of the tenant-farmer, was commented upon, as evincing an imperfect appreciation of the true principles which should regulate agricultural industry and agricultural property.

The close of the year 1849 was marked with every evidence of returning prosperity and commercial security. The exports of the country for the eight months ending the 5th of September, as compared with the same period in 1848, showed an increase of £7,500,000; or of £39,000,000, over £31,500,000; and the increase on the last month of the period was no less than £1,816,000; manifesting a progressive improvement. The year 1848, it is true, exhibited a decrease in our exports of about £5,250,000; the increase of 1849 over 1847, therefore, was something better than £2,750,000. The revenue tables, also, for the year ending the 5th of July, showed a surplus of income over expenditure of £41,000; no very large sum, but still very acceptable in place of an apprehended deficit. Funds, and securities generally, had improved considerably in price during the year; consols, which were as low as a shade under 87 in the first week in January, were at 96½ in the last week of December; when also there was £16,000,000 of bullion in the Bank.

Foreign governments were not tardy in giving in their adhesion to the liberal and enlightened policy which dictated the repeal of the old Navigation Laws of this country.





His Royal Highness  
Prince Albert

Sweden and the United States very early announced their determination to place British shipping upon a footing of equality with that belonging to other nations in their respective ports.

Towards the latter end of the year, his royal highness Prince Albert propounded his great scheme for an Exposition of the National Products and Works of Industry of all Nations, in the Metropolis; which was received throughout the country with a fervour of encouragement, amounting to enthusiasm. Of the royal commission subsequently appointed to carry this important project into effect, Sir Robert Peel was one of the members.

The British islands were visited this summer with that fearful scourge, the cholera, of which the ravages were even more extensive on this occasion, than on its previous visitation in 1832. It raged most fearfully in the two months from 7th of July to 8th of September; during which period 9,739 victims were carried off in the metropolis alone.

Queen Adelaide, relict of King William IV., died after a lingering illness, on the 2nd of December; and, according to the expressed desire contained in her will, was buried, without ostentation or parade, at Windsor, on the 13th.



## CHAPTER XXI.

## THE SESSION OF 1850—THE LAST SPEECH OF SIR ROBERT PEEL.

WE now approach the closing scenes in the career of the distinguished statesman, whose political life was more or less closely mixed up with the public history of this country, and with the interests of the civilized world, during a period of nearly forty years.

The history of the early part of the year 1850 being marked with few striking incidents—fortunately with none of those political and commercial convulsions which gave a painful interest to some of the previous periods of our history—we shall, in the remaining portion of this memoir, restrict ourselves almost entirely to the individual history of Sir Robert Peel, with whose life a remarkable era in our history (one of transition certainly) may be said to have begun and closed. Indeed, the great statesman appeared to have been himself imbued with this feeling; and having accomplished the great measure of Free-Trade, and solicitously watched over its development in the hands of his successors in office, he gradually took less and less part in the debates of parliament; and particularly eschewed giving the encouragement of his voice to the discussion of many vague propositions of reform, financial and social, which, about this time, were brought forward by individual members of the legislature. He appeared to think, that as the country had just undergone an experiment, momentous in its probable results, a pause was needed.

It is interesting, however, and to future generations it will





Drawn by H. Dawe, Esq.

Engraved by H. Cook

HER MAJESTY, THE QUEEN DOWAGER.  
AMELIA-ADELAIDE - LOUISE - THERESE - CAROLINE - WILHELMINA.

*Adelaide*

prove instructive as an example, to observe, how, although Sir Robert Peel, in the last two sessions of his parliamentary career, but more particularly in the last, availed himself, with reluctance, of occasions for the display of his powers of oratory, yet did not disdain the humbler part of mixing in the casual discussions upon matters of practical interest, whenever he thought he could do so with advantage to the House and the country.

Parliament was opened by commission on the 31st of January; when a speech was delivered more than usually explicit, and making mention of several matters of political and domestic interest which occurred about this time.

“MY LORDS, AND GENTLEMEN :

“We are commanded by her Majesty to assure you, that her Majesty has great satisfaction in again having recourse to the advice and assistance of her parliament.

“The decease of her Majesty Queen Adelaide has caused her Majesty deep affliction. The extensive charity and exemplary virtues of her late Majesty will always render her memory dear to the nation.

“Her Majesty happily continues in peace and amity with foreign powers.

“In the course of the autumn, differences of a serious character arose between the governments of Austria and Russia on the one hand, and the Sublime Porte on the other, in regard to the treatment of a considerable number of persons who, after the termination of the civil war in Hungary, had taken refuge in the Turkish territory.

“Explanations which took place between the Turkish and Imperial governments have fortunately removed any danger to the peace of Europe which might have arisen out of these differences.

“Her Majesty having been appealed to on this occasion by the Sultan, united her efforts with those of the govern-



ment of France, to which a similar appeal had been made, in order to assist, by the employment of her good offices, in effecting an amicable settlement of those differences in a manner consistent with the dignity and independence of the Porte.

“Her Majesty has been engaged in communications with foreign states, upon the measures which might be rendered necessary, by the relaxation of the restrictions formerly imposed by the Navigation Laws of this country.

“The governments of the United States of America and of Sweden, have promptly taken steps to secure to British ships in the ports of their respective countries, advantages similar to those which their own ships now enjoy in British ports.

“With regard to those foreign states whose Navigation Laws have hitherto been of a restrictive character, her Majesty has received from nearly all of them assurances which induce her to hope that our example will speedily lead to a great and general diminution of those obstacles which previously existed to a free intercourse by sea between the nations of the world.

“In the summer and autumn of the past year, the United Kingdom was again visited by the ravages of the cholera; but Almighty God, in His mercy, was pleased to arrest the progress of mortality, and to stay this fearful pestilence. Her Majesty is persuaded that we shall best evince our gratitude by vigilant precautions against the more obvious causes of sickness, and an enlightened consideration for those who are more exposed to its attacks.

“Her Majesty, in her late visit to Ireland, derived the highest gratification from the loyalty and attachment manifested by all classes of her subjects. Although the effects of former years of scarcity are painfully felt in that part of the United Kingdom, they are mitigated by the present abundance of food, and the tranquillity which prevails.

“ Her Majesty has great satisfaction in congratulating you on the improved condition of commerce and manufactures. It is with regret that her Majesty has observed the complaints which, in many parts of the kingdom, have proceeded from the owners and occupiers of land. Her Majesty greatly laments that any portion of her subjects should be suffering distress. But it is a source of sincere gratification to her Majesty to witness the increased enjoyment of the necessities and comforts of life, which cheapness and plenty have bestowed upon the great body of her people.

“ GENTLEMEN OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS :

“ Her Majesty has directed the estimates for the year to be laid before you. They have been framed with a strict regard to economy, while the efficiency of the various branches of the public service has not been neglected.

“ Her Majesty has seen with satisfaction the present state of the revenue.

“ MY LORDS, AND GENTLEMEN :

“ Some of the measures which were postponed at the end of the last session, for want of time for their consideration, will be again laid before you. Among the most important of these is one for the better government of the Australian colonies.

“ Her Majesty has directed various measures to be prepared for the improvement of the condition of Ireland. The mischiefs arising from party processions; the defects of the laws regulating the relations of landlord and tenant; the imperfect state of the grand-jury acts; and the diminished number of electors for members to serve in parliament; will, together with other matters of serious consequence, form the subjects of measures to be submitted for your consideration.

“ Her Majesty has learnt with satisfaction that the measures which have been already passed for the promotion of

the public health are in a course of gradual adoption ; and her Majesty trusts, that both in the metropolis, and in various parts of the United Kingdom, you will be enabled to make further progress in the removal of evils which affect the health and well-being of her subjects.

“ The favour of divine Providence has hitherto preserved this kingdom from the wars and convulsions which, during the last two years, have shaken so many of the states of the continent of Europe. It is her Majesty’s hope and belief that by combining liberty with order, by preserving what is valuable, and amending what is defective, you will sustain the fabric of our institutions, as the abode and the shelter of a free and happy people.”

The reference to the subject of the Navigation Laws was of an extremely gratifying character ; the projected measures in regard to Ireland, will be sufficient to indicate the subjects which engrossed a great portion of the attention of parliament during the short, and not very productive, session of 1850. As they belong properly to a subsequent period of history, we shall not touch upon their details, or the incidents of their discussion.

On the 19th of February, Mr. D’Israeli again stood forward as the champion of the agriculturists, and, varying his tactics on this occasion, moved for a committee of the whole House, to inquire into the operation of the Poor Laws, with a view to adopting such a modification as might mitigate the distresses of the agricultural classes. Having at great length repeated his complaints against the operation of the recent measures of free-trade ; whilst, however, he admitted that he and his friends could not shut their eyes to the practical conclusion, that a very large majority in parliament refused to disturb, at present, the settlement so aimed at ; he stated, that if the motion for going into committee were agreed to, the resolutions he should propose would be

the following :—“ 1st. that the establishment charges of the United Kingdom (about £1,500,000) should be transferred to the general revenue ; 2nd. that certain miscellancous rates which, generally speaking, it was convenient to raise by the machinery of the Poor-Law, but had nothing to do with the maintenance of the poor, such as registration of births and deaths, preparation of jury-lists, &c., should also be defrayed by the consolidated fund : 3d. that the charge for casual poor, throughout the United Kingdom, should likewise be transferred to the general revenue.”

Upon this occasion, Sir Robert Peel, faithful to the charge, and not flinching from the responsibility he had undertaken, spoke as follows, on the adjourned debate, February 21. .

He began by observing, that “in regard to the agricultural interest, he did not deny that it was at that moment suffering considerable distress ; that for that distress he felt, on every account, the warmest sympathy.” . . . Here the right honourable baronet was interrupted by one of those disgraceful incidents which had recently so often detracted from the dignity of the proceedings of the House of Commons, but which, until this occasion, had never been enacted at a moment when a speaker of his eminent position was in possession of the floor. A member on the Protectionist benches, apparently fresh from the dinner-table, responded to the speaker’s expressions of sympathy with the agricultural classes, by a cry of “Oh dear !” This occasioned some laughter amongst the members in his immediate neighbourhood, which was immediately rebuked by a general call of “order” throughout the House. Sir Robert Peel felt the indignity, and rebuked the offender in a few severe, but dignified sentences ; and then returned to the subject upon which he was beginning to address the House when interrupted.

“ Other countries,” continued the right honourable baronet,



“ had experienced depression in the price of corn, as great as our own. It was the result of some cause perfectly independent of free-trade. The increased consumption of food in this country was one of the most pleasing incidents in the history of the past year : 5,600,000 quarters of wheat had been, not only imported, but consumed, concurrently with a large increase in the production of British wheat. This was the best indication of prosperity. This additional quantity of food had not been furnished for the upper classes alone, or principally. Millions of quarters required millions of mouths to eat them. Respecting the motion now in discussion, he could not dismiss these extrinsic considerations. The country at large would not interpret their votes by the narrow tenor of the three propositions laid before the House. The measure was one of a series, and a consent to it would involve assent to the whole principle of compensation. It was premature to propose a bill which would absorb, for years to come, the whole surplus revenue before the usual financial statement had been given by the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Many better measures of relief could be suggested. Duties upon articles of construction like bricks, were not merely burdensome by the amount of the payment, but from the restrictions, annoyance, and hazard of prosecution, which accompanied them. Here was a wider and better field for the employment of a surplus revenue. Alluding to the law of settlement, Sir Robert Peel complained of the want of cottages in certain districts, where the labourers had to ride to their work on donkeys, owing to the distance of their habitations. Restating the arithmetical elements of the question, he calculated, that, out of the £2,000,000 now proposed to be transferred, the land bore only £900,000, while in 1826 its proportion was £1,260,000. This was the limit of benefit to the occupiers, even if they got the whole amount ; and for this must be sacrificed every chance of repealing

other taxes that pressed on them more heavily. For these reasons, and because it would commence a retrogression in our commercial policy, he objected to the propositions. Reverting to the personal attacks made upon his conduct, the right honourable baronet indignantly denounced the accusation brought by Lord H. Bentinck, at a late county meeting, of his having been actuated by motives of private lucre; and denied the truth of his lordship's assertions, that his property in the funds was fourfold that which he possessed in land."

Lord John Russell followed Sir Robert Peel, and in the course of his speech, denounced, as highly unworthy and unjust, the imputations of which the right honourable baronet had complained. When the noble lord sat down, Lord Henry Bentinck rose for the purpose, as was supposed, of offering some explanation. What followed is thus recorded in the journals of the following day:—

Lord Henry Bentinck said "he wished to answer a few of the remarks of the right honourable baronet, the member for Tamworth. Giving way to a weakness which he had shown, not for the first time in that House, he made some remarks on him (Lord H. Bentinck) which been hastily endorsed by the noble lord opposite. The right honourable baronet had accused him (Lord H. Bentinck) of having charged him with falsehood and treason."

Sir Robert Peel—"Treachery."

Lord Henry Bentinck considered that much the same thing. "He would now tell the right honourable baronet what he did say. He had admitted that the right honourable baronet was a very benevolent person, and had said that his circumstances enabled him, better than those agriculturists who held no funded or personal property, to deal liberally with his tenants. He had also said, that, to the best of his popular belief, one-fourth of the right honourable baronet's

property was in land, and three-fourths in money or the funds. If the right honourable baronet would now state that it was the reverse,—would say that he had three-fourths in land, and one-fourth only in money, he (Lord Henry) would be satisfied. Probably he had mortgages on land, which came exactly to the same thing. The right honourable baronet also said it was his (Lord Henry's) duty to have investigated the matter, and to have ascertained what was the fact. For his satisfaction, he would state, that one of his chief witnesses was the late Sir Robert Peel, who, when the right honourable baronet was carrying his currency bill in 1819, said he would raise the fortunes of his family, but ruin his country. If the right honourable baronet would now say that he had three-fourths of his property in land and one-fourth in money, he would be satisfied."

Sir Robert Peel—"Sir, I am really quite ashamed at troubling the House. It is true the noble lord said at a public meeting that I had a direct personal interest in passing the repeal of the Corn Laws, because he had reason to believe, with respect to my property, that it was three-fourths in the funds, and one-fourth in landed estate. He now asks me to assert that it is three-fourths in land, and only one-fourth in money, and also, whether I have not something on mortgage. If it is a satisfaction to the noble lord, I will tell him that I have not one single shilling upon mortgage. What I said to the noble lord was, that if he had just reversed his statement, and said that I had three-fourths in land, and one-fourth in the funds, he would have been nearer the truth."

Lord Henry Bentinck having retracted the offensive observations complained of, Mr. D'Israeli replied; and the motion for going into committee was negatived by 273, against 252 votes; majority 21.

The question of effecting a considerable reduction in the

expenditure of the country, by a general retrenchment of the salaries of public functionaries, accompanied also by measures for the purpose of shifting the weight of taxation upon property, and removing it from labour, was again brought under discussion, by a motion in the form of a resolution to that effect, made by Mr. Drummond on the 12th of March. Upon this subject Sir Robert Peel stated, after a few preliminary remarks upon the general condition of the labouring classes, that he fully concurred with the honourable member in the desirableness of reducing the national expenditure upon all occasions when reduction was compatible with the interests of the public service. "But when the House of Commons saw a government who appeared to be impressed with the necessity of retrenchment, and who were proceeding in that course, he doubted if it was not better for the House to stand by and permit the government to take their own course, rather than to obstruct them with general declarations of economy. He had no confidence in the obstructing system of economy occasionally indulged in by that House. He knew how apt the House was to be seized now and then with a hot and cold fit of economy and stern retrenchment. He would not introduce the question of the advantages or disadvantages of a reformed parliament; but this he must say, that he did not believe a reformed parliament had, for a succession of years, promoted economy by the course which it had pursued. As the result of some experience, he must declare, that the government with which he was connected, and other governments, had had very great difficulty in prosperous times, and when the hot fit as to expenditure was on the House of Commons, in resisting the desire of the House of Commons that the expenditure of the country should be increased. And therefore although he did not deny, that whenever there might be a pressure on some class, there was a great desire for immediate retrenchment;



yet he had more confidence in the progressive, reflecting retrenchment, effected by a government, than in the varying and vacillating policy of the House of Commons. As regarded the question of a great reduction in the cost of our military and naval defences, he thought the government ought to feel assured that the House of Commons would protect them if they incurred, with respect to our distant possessions, some of that responsibility which there could be no doubt they must incur by effecting a saving of expenditure. He would go farther on that subject. There was a current maxim, *bellum parate si pacem velis*. That axiom was regarded as one which could not be contradicted. Well, now, he believed that one which must be received with greater qualification, and with greater reserve, had never fallen from the lips of any man. He did not, of course, mean to say, that they ought to be in such an unprepared state as to invite attack. There were many instruments of defence, which, as they could not otherwise be suddenly called into action, must be maintained in a state of efficiency during peace; the ordnance and the navy must be maintained in such a state of efficiency, that in relation to the safety and honour of the country there would be no risk of sudden calamity. But he did, nevertheless, believe that they would best effectually consult the true interests of the country, and provide for its adequate defence, by husbanding its resources, and trusting, in some degree, to those great, though dormant energies, which in a just cause would rally the entire people of this country round the national standard, and enable a gallant and united nation to defy the menaces of foreign powers. The right honourable gentleman (Mr. Labouchere) had said the other night, and with truth, that regard must be had to the state of foreign powers. He (Sir Robert Peel) believed that the example set by foreign powers, of maintaining enormous war-establishments,

ought to be a warning to this country, as well as an example. The great powers of Europe might be proud of their strength, and fancy that they were secure against attack; but he believed, with respect to every continental power of Europe, that the amount of military force kept up in foreign countries, was overburdening the resources of those countries, and, to an almost incalculable extent, diminishing the national capabilities of attack or defence; and he also believed that no greater benefit could be conferred on the human race, than the consent of all those powers to maintain their relative position towards each other, and to reduce their respective forces. The amount of military force which was now maintained, did not add to their relative strength, while it was certainly undermining the foundations of their prosperity; and if the time of severe trial should ever come, the financial trial would be a severe one with respect to all these powers—Russia, Prussia, France, Austria, and the rest. He advised the House of Commons to apply itself to the consideration of practical details, not to decide, on one day, by a majority of 223 to 50 in favour of maintaining the army at 99,000 men, and by a vote of 117 to 19 in favour of maintaining 39,000 seamen and 11,000 marines; and on the very same day to adopt a general resolution which would justify an expectation on the part of the country, that a great and immediate retrenchment was about to take place. On these grounds he could not vote for the financial part of his honourable friend's motion. He firmly believed that if that motion were adopted, it would end in delusion."

The resolution was negatived by 190, against 156 votes.

The moral effect of this discussion, however, was such, that on the 12th of April, Lord John Russell thought it incumbent upon him to move for the appointment of a select committee, to inquire into the amount and nature of all salaries paid out of the public exchequer, for official and

diplomatic services ; the object, as stated, being "the apportionment of the incomes to the labour and responsibility appertaining to every office, so as to avoid injustice to individuals, and extravagance in the public service, whilst providing at the same time for the efficient performance of the public business." The noble lord took occasion to detail a variety of reductions which the government had already accomplished in various departments, contending, that, as at present regulated, the public establishments might fairly challenge comparison in their administration, mechanism, and cost, with those of the Bank, the India House, and other large houses of business. To this motion Mr. D'Israeli moved an amendment, to the effect, that the proposed committee was unnecessary and unprecedented ; and contended that the House should not resign to a few members, for an indefinite period, the performance of some of their most important and responsible functions. The substantive motion was carried, however, by 208 against 113 votes.

Still the question was not allowed to rest. On the appointment of a committee on the 30th of April, Mr. Henry moved an address to the House, to direct a careful revision of all salaries, with a view to an adequate and just reduction of them. This motion the Chancellor of the Exchequer met by moving the "previous question ;" and Sir Robert Peel came to the support of the government with the following speech :—

"He (Sir Robert Peel) could speak from long personal experience, and it was but just to those who filled the subordinate offices of the state, that he should confirm the approbation which had been bestowed on their conduct. In consequence of the frequent changes made with respect to those who presided over the public departments of the state, it often happened that inexperienced persons, on entering office, were, in point of fact, dependent for a certain time on

the knowledge and experience of those who filled the chief clerkships and other offices, in the case of one of these, whom death had recently taken away from his career of usefulness ( Mr. Brooksbank ) every First Lord of the Treasury, and every Chancellor of the Exchequer, would acknowledge how much reliance he was obliged to have, for several months, on the official experience of that gentleman and other persons of that kind. He believed that the same remark would be found true with regard to all the public offices. No Secretary of State, no First Lord of the Treasury, could go through his duty without entrusting secrets of state to men having only £400 a year. And could they give him an instance in which this confidence had been violated? It was not, therefore, the amount of labour alone which was to be regarded, but the extent of the honourable confidence which was to be reposed in these persons; and nothing could be more mischievous for the public service than to reduce the emoluments of these subordinate officers to such an extent as would make them untenable by men who might not perhaps have the means, but who had the feelings and honour, of gentlemen. Sir Robert Peel concluded by stating that he had had an experience of forty years in the various offices of the state, and that he felt bound to give his testimony to the scrupulous fidelity and the great ability displayed by those persons who filled the subordinate posts."

On a division, the motion was negatived by 269 against 173 votes.

The other occasions upon which Sir Robert Peel spoke in the session of 1850—with the exception of his last great speech upon the foreign policy of the government—were few, and his observations brief. It may be interesting, however, shortly to refer to them.

On the 13th of February he gave his cordial support to



the motion of Mr. C. Lewis, for the introduction of a bill to amend the laws relative to the management of the highways in England and Wales.

On the 13th of March, in the course of a discussion upon the county-rates and expenditure bill, he supported its principle, and declared that the justices of the peace had proved admirable depositaries of judicial power, but were improperly constituted as taxing bodies. Public opinion had pronounced in favour of responsible administration of county affairs, and the introduction of that principle would relieve the magistracy from a very invidious position. Inquiry, he believed, would prove that the justices had generally acted with prudence and integrity; but it was advisable to place their management beyond suspicion.

On the 15th of March, the oft-debated question of the admissibility of Jews to parliament, was again mooted, on the motion of Mr. Page Wood, for a select committee to search the journals of the House for precedents relative to the admission of members without taking the oaths required from members of the Church of England. The motion was designed to ascertain the rule in reference to the course to be pursued towards Baron Rothschild; and in introducing it, Mr. Wood disclaimed any intention of prejudging the question as to the advisability of allowing Jews to become legislators. His own impression upon the point of law, as determined by many statutes more or less treating of the subject, was that the law required no alteration in order to allow the member for London to take his seat.

In reference to this motion, Sir Robert Peel reminded the House that he had on two occasions given his cordial support to bills for removing the impediments obstructing the admission of Jews to parliament, and stated that he would be prepared to do so again.

In the committee upon the Australian Colonies bill,

(March 22,) Mr. Mowatt having moved an amendment for expunging the provision which would give the crown power to nominate a portion of the legislative assembly, a discussion arose upon the policy of establishing a second chamber, in the course of which Sir Robert Peel made a few observations. He said "he would exclude altogether the contingency that might arise in future discussions in reference to the necessity or policy of establishing a second chamber, and consider the amendment on its merits. He would assume that the honourable member for Falmouth proposed the establishment of a single chamber, and that its composition should be purely democratic. Were he to assume that there should be but one legislative body, he confessed that he was not so liberal as to withdraw altogether the only check which the crown could have on that body, namely, the right of nomination to a certain extent."

The amendment was lost by a large majority.

On the 25th of March, Sir Robert Peel opposed the motion of Mr. Trelawny for inquiry into the affairs of the duchies of Cornwall and Lancaster, upon the ground, that as the Sovereign and the Prince of Wales were the only parties who would suffer by their mismanagement, so were they alone entitled to interfere in the administrative details of these duchies.

The tardy progress towards completion of the new Houses of Parliament, and the excess of outlay upon them beyond the estimated cost, had been the subject of frequent complaint, and many severe strictures, both in and out of parliament. On the 10th of June, Mr. Hume sought to mark disapproval of these expensive proceedings, by moving an amendment in supply, reducing the vote for the works by £3,000.

Sir Robert Peel defended Mr. Barry and the Fine Arts Commission, and contended, that much of the delay and

increased expense complained of, had been occasioned by alterations from the original plan suggested by Mr. Hume himself; and which had been forced upon the public departments, either by the committee, of which that gentleman had been an active member, or by special votes of the House. These positions he supported by reading copious extracts from the reports of committees published from time to time. With regard to the Fine Arts Commission, and the decoration of the new Houses, the right honourable baronet assumed to himself a full share of the responsibility attaching to that course.

The amendment was negatived by a majority of 144 against 62 votes.

The only remaining topic upon which Sir Robert Peel spoke, previous to his last great speech on Foreign Affairs, was that of the bill for the Abolition of the Vice-Royalty of Ireland. Upon this measure, speaking, on the 18th of June, he expressed himself unfavourably, though he would consent to the experiment being made:—

He said “he considered that as the bill had been brought forward by her Majesty’s government, and as the professed object of it was to promote the good government of Ireland, it was, on those accounts at least, entitled to the most careful consideration of this House. He considered the main question to be,—would the arrangement proposed conduce to the good and satisfactory government of Ireland? All other considerations were in his opinion subordinate to that. The withdrawal of the Lord Lieutenant might affect some local and peculiar interests, but still if the result of the measure should be to promote the cause of good government in Ireland, all considerations of partial and local injury ought to be subordinate. Upon the whole, he was perfectly willing to consent that the experiment should be made; but, in giving that consent, he was bound to say, that

he did it with more hesitation and more doubt as to the advantages that must result from the measure, than many gentlemen appeared to entertain. Of this he was confident, that if local authorities, without the authority of the Lord Lieutenant, were to assume the executive functions of government, Ireland would derive no advantage whatever from the measure. He was quite aware of the difficulties which men of high character and great acquirements had had in administering the government of Ireland, but he thought those difficulties were not so much on account either of their personal qualities, or of the constitution of the office which they had held, as on account of the difficulties inherent in the state of society in Ireland, which difficulties would, he apprehended, continue to operate after this measure should have passed."

The bill, which was also opposed in the Upper House by the Duke of Wellington, was afterwards withdrawn for the session.

We now approach the closing scene in the life, and the last display of the genius, of this great statesman. On the 17th of June, Lord Stanley submitted a motion to the House of Lords in condemnation of the general foreign policy of the Whig administration, and bearing especial reference to the coercion exercised against the small state of Greece, of which this country was by treaty one of the protectors, along with the governments of France and Russia. The circumstances were neither creditable to the Greek ministry, nor to those English subjects in Greece, whose alleged claims against that government had led to the difference between the two countries. A Mr. Finlay, a Scotchman resident at Athens, and a Mr. Pacifico, a Hebrew of Gibraltar, and a subject of the British crown, were the persons whose private affairs involved Great Britain in a paltry dispute with a paltry government. Mr. Finlay claimed com-

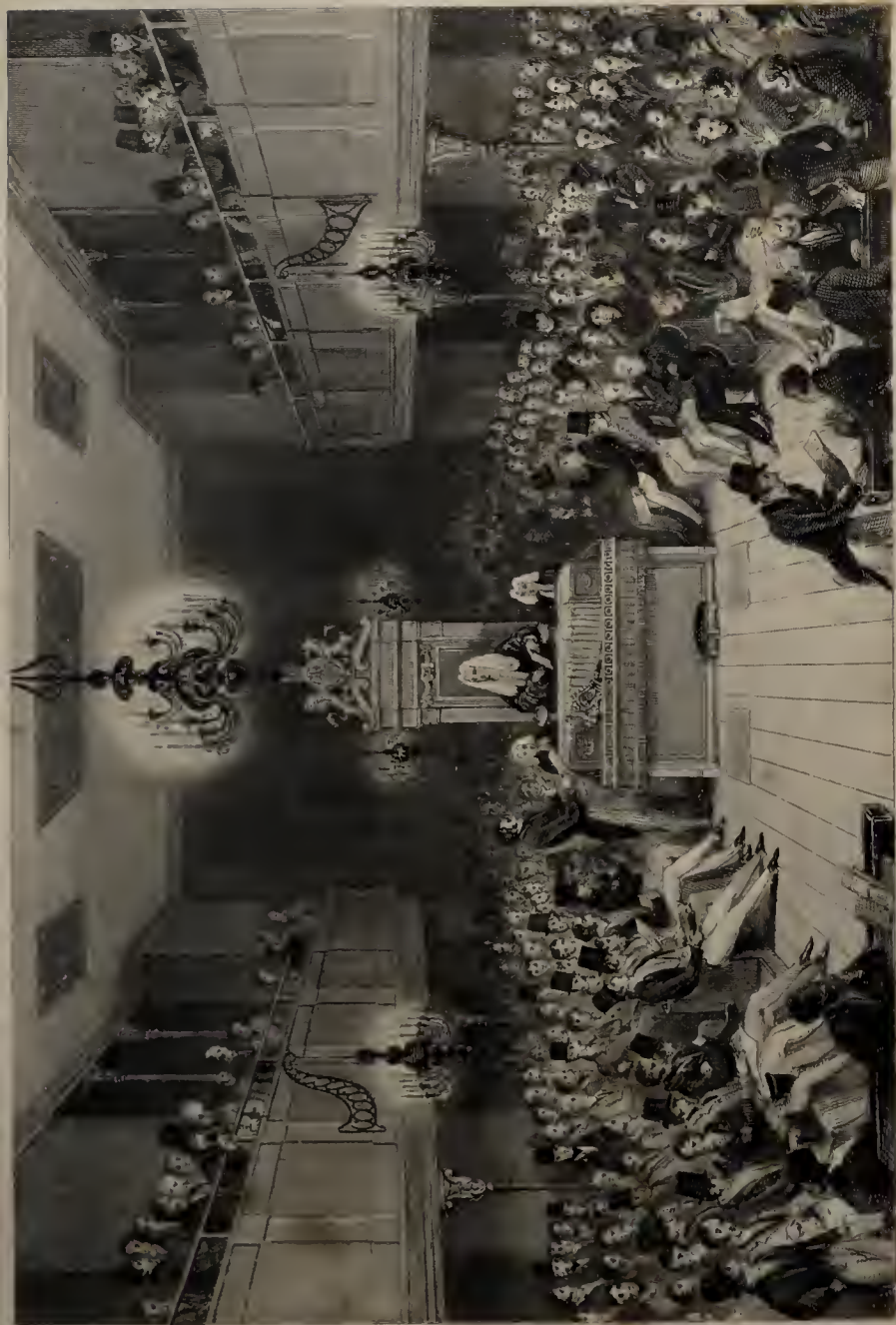


compensation for a garden-plot which had been taken from him to extend the pleasure-grounds, or to erect additional buildings, for the king; and Mr. Pacifico claimed compensation for the destruction of his house and furniture by a furious mob, which had been instigated to the attack by the son of the Greek minister of finance. Both of these claims were asserted by the Greek government to be ridiculously extravagant; and much merriment, not unmingled with a more serious feeling, was excited throughout Europe, when the items of the last-mentioned claim were published, including, as they did, many considerable sums for warming-pans and other articles of domestic use. The conduct of the Greek government in relation to these claims—however open to objection they may have been—became at last of a character insulting to the dignity of the British ambassador and government. Much forbearance was shown from time to time, until at last, acting upon instructions from Lord Palmerston, Mr. Wyse, our representative in Greece, notified to the Greek government, that, unless the claims of these two individuals were satisfied, and unless at the same time an arrangement were made relative to the two small islands of Cervi and Sapienza, also in dispute between the two governments, the British fleet would be instructed to blockade the Piræus. The Greek government, unaware apparently of the fact of which it ought to have been convinced, that Great Britain never made a threat, without intending to execute it, took no notice of this intimation, and, precisely at the expiration of the time allowed for deliberation, the British fleet appeared in the Piræus, and Athens was *de facto* blockaded. The news of this event excited considerable discussion, if not alarm; for it was feared that this country might become involved with France and Russia, our co-protectors of the Grecian kingdom. France ultimately offered her mediation, which was accepted, and

the Baron Gros was dispatched on a mission to Athens. But this unhappy business was not brought to a termination without further difficulty, embarrassment, and irritation. A difference arose between Mr. Wyse and Baron Gros in Athens, the results of which were, that Baron Gros threw up the task he had been delegated to perform, and returned to Paris, and that the French government recalled M. Drouyn de L'Huys, their ambassador in London. It was under these circumstances that Lord Stanley brought forward his motion; which was in the following terms: "That while this House fully recognizes the right and duty of the government to secure to her Majesty's subjects residing in foreign states, the full protection of the laws of those states, it regrets to find, by the correspondence which has been laid upon the table by her Majesty's command, that various claims against the Greek government, doubtful in point of justice, and exaggerated in amount, have been enforced by coercive measures directed against the commerce and people of Greece, and calculated to endanger the continuance of our friendly relations with other powers." A long debate ensued, in which Lord Landsdowne defended the conduct of the government, but of which the result was an adverse vote against Lord Palmerston and the administration, of 169 against 132. The question thus debated resolved itself into two separate issues; the first, whether it were worthy of the dignity, the character, and the power of Great Britain, upon such grounds as the claims of Mr. Finlay and his little garden, or of Mr. Pacifico and his unmentionable crockery-ware, to threaten, bully, and ultimately to make war upon so poor, weak, and defenceless a state as Greece; and second, whether, in the exercise, injudicious or not, as it might have been, Great Britain had given just cause of offence to France, or to any other power of Europe. The decision of the House of Lords practically condemned the

government upon the first of these points, and left the second to the public opinion of the world. To extricate the ministry from the difficulty in which they were placed by this vote of the Lords, Mr. Roebuck brought the whole foreign policy of Lord Palmerston before the notice of the House of Commons, with the view of taking a deliberate vote upon it. This motion excited the greatest interest. The House was unusually crowded with peers and other strangers. Lord Stanley himself attended in the peers' gallery, and the Nepaulese princes, then on a visit to this country with presents to her Majesty, were brought to the spectacle, that they might see the British House of Commons on a night of historical importance. The motion, which was discussed on Monday the 24th of June, precisely a week after Lord Stanley's, was simply to the effect, that the principles on which the foreign policy of her Majesty's government had been regulated, had been such as were calculated to maintain the honour and dignity of this country, and, in times of unexampled difficulty, to preserve peace between England and the various nations of the world." On the second night of the debate, Lord Palmerston delivered a comprehensive and masterly speech in defence of his general policy, which occupied five hours in the delivery, and was received by the House with an enthusiasm of applause, of rare occurrence in the deliberations of that assembly. On the Friday following, Mr. Cockburn, the member for Southampton, made an able and lawyer-like speech in defence of the government, not upon its general foreign policy, which Lord Palmerston himself had done, but with particular reference to the affairs of Greece. Mr. Walpole, Mr. Monckton Milnes, and Mr. Cobden afterwards spoke; and at the conclusion of the speech of the last-named gentleman, Sir Robert Peel arose. Little did that brilliant and excited auditory imagine, when they





Engraved by W. M.

# THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

Engraved by W. M.

ST. JOHN'S, LONDON, 1747





were listening to the calm and sagacious eloquence of the statesman who stood before them at that moment, in full health of body, and in the maturity of his intellectual powers, that his voice would never more be heard amongst them, and that a sudden and shocking death would, in a few short hours, remove him from the senate which he swayed, and from the society which he adorned. But we need not anticipate. On his rising to address the House, all eyes were directed towards him, and much curiosity was felt, to know whether he who had so often stepped in to the rescue of the administration when beset with difficulties, would, on this occasion, throw the ægis of his protection over it. He said :—

“Mr. Speaker : However extended in point of duration the debate has been, and however exhausted are the topics which have been introduced into the discussion, I think the House will admit that I should not be acting in conformity with my sense of duty, if I abstained from assigning the grounds on which my vote will be given. The honourable and learned gentleman, the member for Southampton, has demanded a full explanation of the circumstances under which that vote will be given. He shall have that explanation. I have no reserve. He has stated that there is some dishonourable conspiracy formed against her Majesty’s government. Sir, a more unfounded charge never was preferred. He alleges that there has been some base compromise between gentlemen on this side of the House, entertaining different opinions on matters which affect the public interest. He is wholly mistaken. There has been no such compromise. The honourable and learned gentleman talks of there being three courses of action open to us—three combinations by which office may be obtained. He says, “I demand that you will state which of these three courses of action you contemplate pursuing.” But is it not possible for the honourable and

learned gentleman to suppose that there may be a fourth course of action? Is it not possible for him to speculate on the possibility, that men in this House should intend to give their votes without reference to political combinations? Does he exclude the possibility of that fourth course of action which arises from a conscientious conviction as to the truth? Is that excluded from his contemplation? May it not be possible that men cannot subscribe to a resolution which asserts that a certain course of policy is not the best calculated to maintain peace—and is it not possible that, without reference to personal or party motives, they may decline to affirm a resolution which enunciates principles of greater importance to the future position of this country, whether for good or for evil, than ever were asserted before? I do not forget—the honourable and learned gentleman need not have reminded me of the circumstance—I do not forget that I have given, or attempted to give, to her Majesty's government, a cordial (I will say) support during the last four years. In utter oblivion of the circumstances under which they succeeded to power, I have felt it my duty to give them, not an ostentatious, but, because it was not ostentatious, not the less an effective support. I have not the honour or advantage of their personal friendship. I never had political connection with them. I have had no communication with them during those four years, which might not have been held with them by persons altogether independent of party interests. But I have given them my support because I cordially approved of their policy in domestic affairs. I think that their policy in domestic affairs has been a liberal and conservative policy. I agree with the principles of commercial policy upon which they have acted. So far from there having been any base compromise between myself and honourable gentlemen who sit near me, and whose confidence I have had the misfortune to forfeit,

that I feel bound to say, that every day that passes convinces me more and more, that in a cordial adoption of, and an unequivocal adhesion to, those principles of commercial policy, the peace and true interests of this country are indissolubly bound up. Perhaps now I have said enough to the honourable and learned gentleman for myself and others, to show that there has been no base compromise between us. Well, sir, with respect to her Majesty's government, I feel grateful to them—as grateful to them as one public man can be to another—for the maintenance of those principles which regulate our monetary system. I concur with them, also, as to their Irish policy. I have not forgotten the declaration I made upon Irish policy the day on which I quitted office; and I still hold the opinion, that the true policy to be observed towards Ireland, is to maintain civil equality, and not to permit religious opinions to constitute any disqualification for the favour of the crown. It is because, then, I concur with them in the general principles of their domestic policy, and because I agree with them in their commercial legislation—I am only speaking, mind, of the legislative measures which they have brought forward with reference to internal circumstances—that their measures have had my cordial support. I laugh to scorn the imputation, that there has been some connection with foreign conspirators. I believe of others, what I know of myself, that they would repudiate with loathing, any connection which would be hostile to the interests of my country. I entirely disbelieve the existence of any such conspiracy. With respect to the combination of political opponents, of course, in the conduct of party warfare, there must be concert, there must be combination. I do not speak of it with the slightest disrespect; but as the honourable and learned gentleman demands full proofs, I will state, that so little have I been a party to a combination of any kind, that I never saw the



resolution adopted by the Lords, until I read it in the newspapers. I knew as little of the concoction of it, and was as much unconcerned with the proposal of it, as the noble lord against whose policy it was directed. I think, therefore, that I can labour under no influences which can prevent my giving a fair and dispassionate consideration to the question before the House. It is said, that after four years of patient acquiescence, after four years of neutrality and silence, I and others have come forward with a condemnation of the government. Sir, I come forward with no condemnation; but the honourable and learned gentleman, the member for Sheffield, demands of me to come forward with a vote of positive approbation; and not only with approbation, but with the assertion of principles, the consideration of which is of tenfold more importance than the saving of any government. I do not forget that there have been occasions on which I have supported the foreign policy of her Majesty's government. I supported their policy with respect to Portugal. I would not concur in the vote of censure which was proposed against them on account of their Spanish policy, because I thought that it would have borne too harshly on Sir Henry Bulwer, and would have been too severe a visitation on the noble lord's government; but I did express my regret, at that time, that the tone of the noble lord's communications with Spain was not at all calculated to conciliate the good will of that country. There was also one important part of their policy, in which I agreed—I agreed with them in their recognition of the French republic. I agreed with them as to the policy of recognizing a government which appeared to me to be in accordance with the general wishes of the French nation. I go further, and I say that I believe that recognition was not a mere cold, reluctant acquiescence in an unavoidable necessity. I believe that the true policy of this country is to maintain friendly relations,

and to cultivate a good understanding with that great power which is on the other side of the Channel. And it is because I concur in the policy of cultivating that good understanding, that I now ask you [turning towards the Treasury bench] to give me an account of your French relations, and to tell me why it is that such a correspondence as that which has taken place, is laid on the table of the House, and why it is that you have alienated from you the feelings of the people of France, who now show no disposition to place any confidence in your friendship? The honourable and learned gentleman, the member for Sheffield, moves a resolution, the effect of which is to imply approbation of the principles by which the foreign policy of the government has been guided. He says that the principles upon which it has been regulated have been such as were calculated to maintain the honour and dignity of this country, and calculated—the honourable gentleman omitted the word ‘best,’ and contented himself with a simple affirmation that they were calculated—to preserve peace between England and the various nations of the world. Now, sir, I very much dislike professions of political faith. I very much dislike a subscription to certain articles, which, in order to cover a censure from the other House, I am called on to subscribe. Let us examine, then, the principles which have regulated the conduct of her Majesty’s government in their foreign policy. Is it too much to ask the honourable and learned gentleman, before he calls on me to subscribe to his resolution, to be good enough to define what those principles are? Are they the principles of non-intervention? Perhaps, however, the honourable and learned gentleman will say, ‘Subscribe to my articles, and I leave you to collect the principles by which the foreign policy of her Majesty’s government has been regulated, from your own observation of their course of conduct.’ But that would be

a very vague definition of the articles of a political faith. The honourable and learned gentleman divided the political history of Europe into three periods. First of all, there was the period from 1789, the commencement of the first French revolution, to 1815, the time of the general peace. The second period ranged from 1815 to 1830; and the third reached from 1830 to the present time. It was in 1830, the honourable and learned gentleman said, that there dawned upon us the commencement of a happier period, with the recognition of the dynasty of the House of Orleans. Sir, I was a party to that recognition. My noble friend, Lord Aberdeen, was Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs at that time. We announced in the speech from the throne, that the elder branch of the House of Bourbon had ceased to reign. We commenced the course which her Majesty's government has since pursued; and seeing that the change of dynasty was in accordance with the sentiments of the French people, we conveyed to the French monarch the cordial recognition, by this country, of his title to the throne which he had ascended.

“With regard to the foreign policy which has been pursued since 1830, I apprehend that it would be no answer to the vote of the House of Lords to pass a panegyric on the principles which have governed the domestic policy of the country for the last twenty years. The noble lord means that we shall approve of his policy as distinguished from the policy of his predecessors. It was the noble lord's own declaration which removed any doubt from my mind. It was the noble lord, (Lord J. Russell), who said on the first night on which reference was made to the vote of censure of the House of Lords, that his noble friend, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, would not be the minister of Austria, would not be the minister of Russia, would not be the minister of France, but that he would be the minister of England. What was the meaning of that

declaration? The noble lord has too much prudence and discretion to point a sarcasm against three of the greatest powers of Europe. The noble lord can hardly think that there is such a fund of goodwill in those quarters, that he can afford a taunt of that description. My construction of that passage therefore was, that the noble lord meant to condemn the conduct of the foreign affairs of this country while my noble friend, Lord Aberdeen, was Secretary of State; and I consider, therefore, that the resolution for which my vote is asked, is a tacit reflection on the policy for which my noble friend and myself are responsible. I have been connected with my noble friend during the whole period for which he was Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. I was connected with him at the period when, as I stated, we recognized the House of Orleans, and we determined to maintain the most friendly relations with France. I continued to be connected with him till July, 1846, when, in surrendering power at the feet of a majority of this House, I announced the termination of our dispute with the United States, by the adjustment of the affairs of Oregon. I do not look back upon my connection with my noble friend with any other feeling than that of cordial satisfaction. I believe there never existed a minister less disposed to make a sacrifice of the honour or interests of this country, or one who was more sincere in his desire of maintaining not only peace, but friendly relations, with the rest of the world. I never understood this House to disapprove of the policy of my noble friend. I never understood this House to convey an imputation that, in our desire to maintain peace, we showed a disposition to sacrifice either the honour or the interests of this country. I certainly do recollect that the maintenance of peace was often most difficult. I recollect that we had to soothe an excited state of the public mind in France, and I must say,



that it was the good fortune of England, France, and I may add, of the world, that at a critical period of our history, one of the most stupid and foolish causes of war that ever arose—I mean the expulsion of Mr. Pritchard from Tahiti—did not terminate in hostilities between the two countries. Perhaps the House will recollect, that the name of “Pritchardites” was affixed to the large party in France who supported the cause of peace; and I will do the justice to a fallen minister, M. Guizot, to declare my belief, that it was mainly owing to his courage, to his resolution, and to his determination, to resist the war-cry in France, that we were able to avert the calamities of war. Well, I have said, that we had difficulties to contend with in maintaining peace. We were charged by the noble lord, (Viscount Palmerston), with making the Ashburton “capitulation.” We were charged with yielding too much to the great powers; but the result was, that the House of Commons generally did not share the opinion of the noble lord, and the policy which we pursued, of maintaining power without the sacrifice of honour, was a policy which met with the cordial approbation of the country. I may say, that, separated as I am from those with whom I had once the good fortune to act, that separation has not made me forget the generous and cordial support which our foreign policy received from them. In justice to myself, and to them, I could not acquiesce in any covert reflection on the policy which was then pursued—the policy of peace consistently with the maintenance of national honour. The resolution of the honourable and learned gentleman embraces two objects—the protection of the government, and a declaration of certain principles. He says, that the principles which have regulated the foreign policy of the government are calculated to maintain the honour and dignity of this country, and to preserve peace. I wish

I could give an affirmative answer to that resolution. It would be more agreeable to my private feelings, and more consonant to my disposition, to support the government; but I speak now of that particular affair which led to the vote of the House of Lords, and I cannot, consistently with my conscientious convictions, declare that the course which her Majesty's government has pursued in that affair, is a course calculated to maintain the honour and dignity of this country, and to preserve peace between this country and the other nations of the world. I am no partisan of the Greek government. I am disgusted with their intrigues and their evasions. I have had experience of them—I knew how impossible it was to procure either redress or satisfaction from them. I had occasion—at least my noble friend with whom I acted (Lord Aberdeen)—had occasion to express to them his deep dissatisfaction of the course that was pursued by them. The noble lord (Palmerston) read a letter, which was addressed by my noble friend to the government of Greece, through our minister; he made much of that letter, and contrasted it with his own letter; but why we were authorized in making that communication to the government of Greece was, because we had the misfortune of standing towards them in the position of a creditor, of a creditor who received no money, and could get no satisfaction—who was entitled to an annual payment, with two other powers—and to whom remonstrances were addressed in vain; and when we saw the government of that country removing from office men of the highest character, and appointing others subject to grievous imputations, I think the creditor thus deprived of his money, or the prospect of obtaining it, was justified in holding pretty strong language of warning and remonstrance to those who were making appointments which still more obstructed the prospect of any settlement. The noble lord read that letter with great emphasis, and contrasted it

with the letter he had written to our minister at Madrid, and he said, 'See the course I pursue—you absolutely authorize a communication to be made to the sovereign—directly to the sovereign—whereas I am more cautious, I am more conciliating. I addressed my letter to the minister of England, residing at Madrid, but he expressly said to him, it is most embarrassing to interfere in the domestic affairs of other countries; her Majesty's government are so sensible of the inconvenience of interfering, even by friendly advice, in the internal affairs of independent states, that I have to abstain from giving you instructions to make any representation whatever to the Spanish ministers;' and then the noble lord said, and it was received with considerable acclamation, 'Contrast my conduct with that of Lord Aberdeen, who directed a communication to be made directly to the sovereign, when I would not even approach the minister with the language of remonstrance.' The noble lord charged my right honourable friend (Sir James Graham) with suppressing the passage that bore testimony to his great forbearance. I was disposed to think that he should be rather satisfied with my right honourable friend for suppressing that passage, for it contained this intimation to this British minister: 'Though you should be careful not to express your sentiments in a manner that would create discontent, yet you need not conceal from any of those persons who have the power of remedying existing evils, the fact that such opinions are entertained.' Now, for the purpose of avoiding embarrassment, I would rather make the communication direct to the minister, or to the sovereign, but though he tells the British minister to withhold the fact from the minister and the sovereign, he is to have no scruple whatever in communicating the views of the British government to those who are in opposition to the government."

Viseount Palmerston: "Read that over again."

Sir Robert Peel (reading): “‘You will, of course, take care to express, on no occasion, on this subject, sentiments such as these I explain to you. You will take care not to express those opinions, or increase or encourage discontent, yet you need not conceal from any of those persons who may have the power of remedying existing evils, the opinions we entertain.’ Now it appeared that Spain, at that time, was divided into two parties—the constitutional, and the despotic—that the constitutional party had enlarged views, and would remedy the evils from which Spain was suffering—and I take it to be the noble lord’s intention, that the views of the government of England should be communicated to them. I was speaking of the government of Greece—I admit you had a just claim upon that government. I admit that neither the birth nor religion of M. Pacifico constituted a reason why he should not have a right to indemnity, as well as the British noble or British subject of the highest rank. I admit that the meanness of his residence is not to be stated as a reason for withholding from him commiseration. I concede to you, for the sake of argument, that you were justified in the claims you professed, and I say there was an obvious mode of settling them without offending France or provoking a rebuke from Russia. I believe that, without any compromise of your own dignity, you might have got the whole money you demanded, and avoided the difficulties you were involved in with those two states. What was your position with respect to Russia and France when you determined upon this application? With regard to Russia, you had asserted the authority of England, and remonstrated with Russia for the attempt to expel the Hungarian refugees from the Turkish territory, and she had acquiesced in your demand. With regard to France, you had the assurance of her most cordial sympathy and good feeling towards you. Never was there



a period at which it was more the interest of this country to conciliate good feeling in France. France was weak—was torn by intestine division—you could have made concessions to her at that time without any imputation on your honour. A conciliatory course of conduct on your part towards France in the hour of her weakness from intestine division, would have been remembered with permanent gratitude by her in the hour of her strength. What necessity was there for provoking the feelings of France or Russia? I don't ask you to abandon any just claim upon Greece, but why not say this at this critical period—when it was necessary to maintain a good understanding both with Russia and France, in respect to the affairs in Northern Germany—why not say to both of them—‘We have claims on Greece—you are co-guarantying powers;—the law of nations would enable us to proceed at once to obtain summary redress, but we will not send fifteen sail of the line and threaten Greece with the interruption of her commerce, could we invoke your good offices, and attempt to settle this difference by friendly arbitration. Why not say, there may be a limit to delay; your friendly arbitration may fail; we will not abandon our claims; insults have been offered to us, for which we demand an apology; but we have pecuniary claims, which we will not insist upon by force without an appeal for your good offices.’ You may quote to me instances where the United States attacked Portugal, and France sent a fleet to Naples, and where other parties demanded redress; but the true policy of England would have been to set the example of a different course of action, so far as she could have done it without the compromise of honour. Though France and Russia were co-guarantying powers of the territory, and concerned with you in the loan to Greece, yet, notwithstanding that, I think you would be right, if necessary, to enforce your demand according to the law of nations, by force; but if every country, without

consideration, at once enforced their rights by force, there would be no security for the peace of Europe. I don't deny your right, but I say, every consideration of policy, under the circumstances in which you stood with regard to Russia at that time—Russia having acquiesced in your demand for the withdrawal of her requisition for the expulsion of the Hungarian refugees from Turkey, and France having shown every disposition to confide in you, and act cordially with you—there was every motive at that time for your exhausting every effort to settle the matter through their good offices, before you resorted to force, reserving to yourself the power of resorting to force in case of their good offices failing. Why, you did not object to their good offices. You accepted them when they were tendered by France—why not invite them—why not from the outset invite the good offices of France? and thus, as I believe, you would have effected the adjustment of the matter, and gained the good will of Russia and of France. You would have avoided giving an offence to France, and, above all, you would have avoided those rebukes administered to you by Russia and France, which I cannot read without pain, and having read which, I cannot vote for the resolution that the course you have pursued maintains the honour and dignity of this country. I do not blame you for your ultimate concessions, or for your not resenting their language, but do not ask me for my positive approbation of your conduct. I blame you for your conduct towards France, after you had accepted her good offices. I see no reason whatever for the course you pursued, and I think it was easy to foresee that it would involve you in the difficulty in which it did. When I read the letters of M. Drouyn de Lhuys and of General La Hitte, I never saw letters that contained such positive evidence of the disposition of France. There was something touching in them. That great power approached you. She said, 'you

have resorted to force, and have alarmed Russia and Europe. You sent fifteen sail of the line to the Piræus, to insist upon your demands. Accept of our good offices. We tell you in confidence, the employment of our good offices may assist you.' Was not that a motive for us to accept them? How, then, can the honourable gentleman who has moved the resolution ask me to assent to it, and tell us that France has become the vassal of Russia? Is that true? He who makes that assertion asks me to acquiesce in his motion. Who has made France the vassal of Russia? Has England tended to do it by the refusal of her good offices, by your refusal in the first instance to accept the convention? When M. Drouyn de Lhuys opened to you the prospect that you might settle the question in London, between the foreign minister of this country, and the representative of France, you might obviate all those delays that had occurred in Athens by settling it here; why did you not send an immediate intimation to Mr. Wyse, not that the basis of a convention was settled, but that there was the prospect of an amicable settlement here?

"The noble lord says a communication was made as early as the 19th of April to Mr. Wyse, and that he had no opportunity of writing until that day. It is true, that the bases of the convention were not settled until the 15th of April, but the moment there was a prospect of an amicable arrangement in London, that instant you should have sent to announce it to Mr. Wyse. You knowing the instructions he had, in certain contingencies to employ force, why not notify to Mr. Wyse the prospect of an amicable arrangement here, instead of the employment of force? Will the noble lord tell me why he neglected to do so? He said we had a steamboat at Boulogne, and the French government had one at Marseilles, and the French government could despatch the

‘Bourbon’ on the 12th; but how could we despatch one from Folkstone at the same time? But why not communicate with the French government? Why not put this question to them—‘Have you an intention of communicating with your representatives the prospects of an amicable settlement? If you have, will you permit me to avail myself of the opportunity to make a communication to our minister?’ That would be the obvious plan to prevent a misunderstanding. Why did the Bourbon sail from Marseilles without a communication for Mr. Wyse, from the noble lord, similar in spirit to that sent to the French minister? You read Lord Normanby’s letter, stating the despair of the French government; and the moment you read that letter of Lord Normanby, and were aware of the feelings of the French government, why did you not at once frankly say, ‘there has been a mistake and misunderstanding, and an unintentional delay; but to convince you we had no intention of giving offence, we volunteer to adopt at once the London convention?’ Why, what would be the obvious effect of this conduct? It would give consolation to the wounded honour of France—founded, perhaps, on unjust suspicions. Why did you not at once tender your acceptance of the London convention in place of the Greek convention? You were asked to do it. You refused, and you were ultimately obliged to do it. In the communication made by General La Hitte to the French Chamber, he says, ‘that which I insisted upon on the 20th of May, and which preceded the withdrawal of our representative from England, that in substance I have obtained, and France has accepted the proposal of Lord Palmerston.’ That was a painful communication for an Englishman to read; it might have been prevented by making the first offer to France, of that which France demanded in the first instance, and which was subsequently conceded. I think you were right in making the



concession subsequently. I blame you not for having made that concession, rather than interrupt a good and cordial understanding with France; but don't ask me to vote that the course you have taken is the most consistent with the dignity of this country. I ask the noble lord—I ask the two noble lords—if this had happened to Lord Aberdeen and myself; if we had received this letter from Russia—if we had seen the French minister withdraw from this court because we would not accede to a demand to which we subsequently agreed—I say, if we had proposed a vote that the course we had taken was most consistent with the dignity and honour of England, I ask whether you could remain in your seats until I had made that proposal? I am not willing to provoke any censure, but it would be utterly inconsistent with a regard to truth, to vote my positive approbation, and make a declaration that the course he has taken is the best. Can I see your present position with respect to Austria, France, and Russia—can I see the mighty questions that still remain unsettled in the north of Europe, and the advantage that you should be on friendly terms with all those powers; can I see that, and vote that you have taken the course best calculated to maintain peace? Peace, no doubt, there is; there is no disturbance by actual war; but if the learned gentleman's resolution has any force, it should mean the amicable relations that ought to exist between great powers in the furtherance of their different duties. What is this diplomacy? It is a costly engine for maintaining peace. It is a remarkable instrument used by civilized nations for the purpose of preventing war. Unless it be used for that purpose—unless it be used to appease the angry passions of individual men, and check the feelings which arise out of national resentment—unless it be used for that purpose, it is an instrument not only costly, but useless. It is not the object of diplomacy to fester every

wound, instead of soothing it—to place a minister in every court of Europe, for the purpose, not of preventing quarrels or of adjusting quarrels, but for the purpose of continuing an angry correspondence in this place, or of promoting what is supposed to be an English interest, by entering into a contest with the representatives of other powers. Not only is the expenditure on this costly instrument thrown away, but this great engine used in civilized societies, for the purpose of maintaining peace, is perverted into a cause of hostility. I have very little disposition to enter into this matter. I say, with truth, the feelings that actuated me for the last four years remain. I do not desire to enter into angry or hostile controversy, and shall make no reference whatever to many of the topics that were introduced into that most able and temperate speech (that of Lord Palmerston,) which made us proud of the man who delivered it vindicating, with becoming spirit, and with an ability worthy of his name, the policy and conduct he had pursued.

“ Having assigned, as it appears to me, conclusive reasons for not voting for the honourable gentleman’s motion of express approbation, I come to that which is a proposal of more importance. The interests of the government are small in comparison with the consideration of the principle of the honourable gentleman’s motion. The honourable and learned gentleman, (Mr. Cockburn,) says that this motion has reference to the past merely. No such thing. Is this a motion to declare that, whether the government were right or wrong in certain individual instances, their conduct under great difficulties had been, in respect to Greece, not deserving of censure? Is that the motion? No; but it asks me to affirm—to subscribe to a certain thing, and to indefinite principles, the explanation of which I cannot collect from the speech of its able propounder. I shall lay under the consideration of the House, and of the noble lord.

the declaration I am called upon to make. The honourable gentleman says, there shall be no mistake as to the import of the resolution. It is a resolution to this effect—we are to tell the people of all foreign countries with whom we are related, that our power, so far as it is officially concerned, is not to be employed to coerce their rulers; but in so far as the moral influence of this country and this government is concerned, the world shall know we are friendly, whenever we find endeavours made on the part of any body of men to vindicate for themselves the rights of self-government. The intention of the motion is, that the House shall fairly, openly, plainly, and without ambiguity, declare ‘we are for self-government.’ We are to say to the nations of the world—I believe I am quoting correctly the sentiments of the honourable and learned gentleman—we are to say to the nations of the world—you who vote for this resolution are to make this declaration to the nations of the world on the part of this House—‘We are favourable to those efforts of man by which he endeavours to raise himself up in the scale of nations, and, by his own enlightenment, and a confidence in his own powers to govern himself, resists that tyranny which, under the name of legitimacy, has ever sought to crush in him all those powers which we, as Englishmen, consider to be the very birthright that nature has given to us.’ There shall be no mistake, says the honourable and learned member for Sheffield, as to my intention. This declaration shall be made ‘openly, plainly, and without ambiguity.’ But I am asked what is this antagonistic principle. The challenger has been asked over and over again to declare it. I will declare it. The principle for which I contend is antagonism to the principle of the honourable and learned gentleman; it is that principle for which every statesman of eminence in this country, for the last fifty years, has contended, namely, that of non-interference with

the internal affairs of other countries. I say, that the honourable and learned member is calling upon me to affirm that principle which was contended against by Fox, when it was employed in favour of arbitrary power—a principle which was resisted by Canning, and resisted by Lord Castlereagh, at the congress of Vienna, when the combined sovereigns attempted by force to check the progress of constitutional liberty.

“ Now, this is a matter of such grave importance, so far superior to those other matters incidentally and collaterally connected with the question more immediately before the House, that I must entreat its attention. I affirm, that the principle for which you contend, is that principle which was asserted by the Convention of France on the 19th of November, 1792. It is the principle which was again abandoned by that same Convention on the 13th of April, 1793, because France found it utterly impossible to maintain it consistently with the maintenance of peace. After the treaty of Pilnitz, and after the manifesto of the Duke of Brunswick, founded upon the same principle, viz., the assertion of the right to interfere in the domestic affairs of other countries. [An honourable member here made an observation, which was inaudible in the gallery, and the right honourable baronet, resuming his address, said:]—Oh, I admit the assertion of the right to interfere in favour of despotism, and not of liberty—I say, that the declaration made by Austria and Prussia on the invasion of France, was founded on hostility to republican institutions. They demanded of the people of France that they should re-instate the sovereign in possession of his throne. We were unable to maintain peace with France; for a certain time we declared our willingness to maintain peace with France, notwithstanding the declaration of war by Austria and Prussia; but we did it under these circumstances: on May 12th, 1792, M. Chauvelin



informed Lord Grenville, that 'France rejects all ideas of aggrandizement. She will preserve her limits, her liberty, her constitution, her inalienable right of reforming herself whenever she may think proper ; she will never consent that, under any relation, foreign powers shall attempt to dictate, or even dare to nourish a hope of dictating, laws to her. But this very pride, so natural and so just, is a sure pledge to all the powers from whom she shall have received no provocation, not only of her constantly pacific dispositions, but also of the respect which the French will know how to show, at all times, for the laws, the customs, and all the forms of government, of different nations. The king, indeed, wishes it to be known, that he would publicly and severely disavow all those of his agents at foreign courts in peace with France, who should dare to depart an instant from that respect, either by fomenting or favouring insurrections against the established order, or by interfering in any manner whatever in the interior policy of such states, under pretence of a proselytism which, exercised in the dominions of friendly powers, would be a real violation of the law of nations.' That was the declaration of France after the revolution of 1789, made to England on the 24th of May, 1792, and upon which Pitt relied as his ground for maintaining not only neutrality, but even friendly relations, with the new government. But shortly after, France took a very different course. What is the honourable and learned member's resolution? It is this, 'That we are favourable to those efforts of man by which he endeavours to raise himself in the scale of nations, and by his own enlightenment, and a confidence in his own powers to govern himself, resists that tyranny which, under the name of legitimaey, has ever sought to crush in him all those powers which we as Englishmen consider to be the very birthright that nature has given to us.' What was the declaration of the Convention of 1793? It was, that the

National Convention, in the name of France, would grant friendly aid and assistance to all those powers which were seeking their liberty; in fact, it offered assistance to all those who wished for self-government, and the Convention charged the executive powers to send orders to their different generals to give assistance to such powers as might wish to rise in the cause of liberty. Seeing, however, the universal indignation which that declaration brought upon the National Convention, it declared upon the 13th of April, 1793, in the name of the French people, 'that it will not intermeddle, in any manner, in the government of other countries, but that it will rather bury itself under its own ruins than suffer any other power to intermeddle in the internal management of its affairs.' Thus, while they refused to allow any other power to intermeddle with their interior administration, they disclaimed at the same time any wish to intermeddle in any manner in the government of other countries. They withdrew the objectionable declaration of the 19th of November, because they found that it excited against the French government, the indignation of all independent powers. It was upon this principle that Fox denounced the proclamation of the Duke of Brunswick, quoted Vatel, and other great authorities in support of the principle of non-interference, and denounced the iniquitous conduct of the Duke of Brunswick. We are, however, called upon to relinquish this principle of non-interference, and to declare in favour of this principle of self-government; we are to declare in favour of the people who resist, under the name of legitimacy, the tyranny that has sought to crush them. Now, really this is a most serious undertaking on the part of this House. If you claim that right for yourselves, you must give a correlative right to other powers. Self-government! who shall construe what is the basis of self-government? We are living in the neighbourhood of a

great republic, in the neighbourhood of a republic which may be prosperous, which may consolidate its power, and which maintains that legitimaey is inconsistent with self-government, and that monarehy is inconsistent with self-government. If I elaim the right to introduce my notions of self-government into an independent nation, can I deny the right of Francee to introduce its notions of self-government in a country which is opposed to republican constitutions?

“Recollect our manifold relations with other countries in every quarter of the globe—recollect our possessions in North America—reeollect our monarehical colonies in close contaet with republican institutions. The American notion of self-government differs from ours. The American notion of self-government probably goes to the extent that there ought to be universal suffrage, and that all classes should have a right to exereise a voice in the affairs of the government of the country. If I enforce my ideas of monarehical constitutional government over a despotie country, what right have I to remonstrate against the United States for introducing into the monarchical colonies of Great Britain—its immediate neighbours—their republican notions of what constitutes self-government? But does this right of self-government extend beyond Europe? If so—we govern millions of people in India—are we to admit the right of other powers to inculcate the rights of self-government among them? Which, therefore, is the wisest policy—to interfere with the institutions and manners of other countries, or to adopt the principle of Pitt, Fox, Grenville, Canning, and Castlereagh, that the true poliey of this country is that of non-interference in the affairs of other countries? Is it politie for us to go to China, and to intermix with our commercial relations there, our notions of self-government? Shall we instruct our consul there, Dr. Bowering, to read to

the Chinese lectures on political economy? There is in China a learned professor of political economy, who is the representative of this country; shall we invite him to instruct the Chinese in their duty towards themselves, and in matters of self-government? Or are we to make allowance for their peculiar institutions and manners, and tell them that we wish to entertain relations of perfect amity with them, without concerning ourselves with their peculiar political views of self-government? The latter I believe to be by far the wisest course; the one least likely to involve us in trouble or embarrassment, best calculated to enable us to maintain peace, to make commerce prosperous, and to prevent other nations entertaining feelings of jealousy with respect to our conduct. I maintain that to be the best policy so far as England is concerned. It is also my firm belief that you will not advance the cause of constitutional liberty by attempting to dictate in this matter to other countries. Depend upon it that if you do so attempt to dictate, your intentions will be mistaken, and you will rouse feelings upon which you did not calculate. You will invite opposition to existing governments to an extent of which you have no conception, and frightened by your own interference, you may withdraw your countenance from those whom you have excited, and leave in their minds nothing but the recollection that you have betrayed them. But even if you succeed in your endeavours, I doubt much whether any institutions which take root under your patronage will be lasting. Constitutional liberty will alone be worked out by the efforts of those who feel strongly the necessity for it; you will only overlay it by your help, and by the exercise of your principle of interference,—against which I remonstrate, against which I enter my protest, and to which to-night I will not be a party. You are departing from the safe policy of Englishmen—you are involving your-



selves in difficulties, the extent of which you can hardly conceive—you are retarding the progress of constitutional freedom, by encouraging its advocates to look to you for aid and assistance, instead of to those efforts which can alone establish it, the successful exertions of which can alone be useful. I have decided to give a reluctant dissent to the motion of the honourable and learned member for Sheffield, and I have determined to take that course upon this occasion, which I have taken upon every other. I will not evade the difficulty by silence or by absence. I will state the grounds upon which I protest against the resolution, the carrying of which will give a false impression with respect to the dignity and honour of this country, and establish principles which you cannot carry into execution without imminent danger to the best interests of the country.”

Lord John Russell rose immediately after Sir Robert Peel had concluded this brilliant, argumentative, and conciliatory speech, and justified the course which the government had pursued, not alone in Greece, but throughout the European continent. He maintained also, with much earnestness and eloquence, that the administration upon such a question as this, was bound, in honour, to take the deliberate opinion of the House of Commons, and not to lie under the imputation of having pursued an impolitic or mischievous line of conduct, which had been cast upon it by the adverse decision of the House of Lords. He charged the opposition with unfairness; and concluded by reiterating his conviction, that the government had, by its foreign policy, consulted the true honour and highest interests of Great Britain, and that it deserved credit for having, during times of great difficulty and danger, preserved the peace of the world. Mr. D’Israeli concluded the debate by a speech on the opposite side; when, after a brief reply from Mr. Roebuck, the House divided at four o’clock in the morning, showing a

division of 310 in favour of the ministry, and of 264 against it. The division evolved some curious party combinations. The minority included not only the men who desired to overthrow the ministry, and step into office themselves, and who, for this purpose, prompted the attack upon Lord Palmerston in the House of Lords; but men who did not seek office, and others who, on all other questions, had been found among the general supporters of the government. The "party without statesmen," as it was called, with Mr. D'Israeli for its chief; the "statesmen without party," including Sir Robert Peel, Sir James Graham, and Mr. Gladstone; and the party of free-trade and parliamentary reform, including Mr. Cobden, Sir William Molesworth, and others, were found acting in concert in opposition to the ministry. Never did such conflicting interests find themselves united in the votes of a minority. The result was a signal triumph for the government; the nullification of the hostile vote of the House of Lords; and a notification to the world, that Great Britain still held its place in the vanguard of civilization; that wherever an Englishman was, the whole moral and physical force of England was with him, to support him in his rights, and to protect him if he were wronged; and that the opinion of this country, on any matter of European importance, could not be scorned or set at nought by any government, whether weak or powerful. This momentous debate reflected much credit upon the British parliament, and proved that the ancient eloquence was not extinct, and only needed great occasions to call it forth with renewed splendour.

## CHAPTER XXII.

MELANCHOLY ACCIDENT TO, AND DEATH OF, SIR ROBERT  
PEEL—PROCEEDINGS IN PARLIAMENT—POPULAR SYMPATHY  
—CONCLUSION.

AFTER this important division, Sir Robert Peel walked home to his residence in Whitehall Gardens by the full daylight of a beautiful summer morning, and retired to rest. Early in the day he was up, and his active mind was again at work. In the forenoon (June 29th) he attended a meeting of the Commission for arranging the preliminaries of the Great Industrial Exhibition of 1851, and for selecting a plan for the building. In the afternoon, shortly before five o'clock, he took an airing on horseback, accompanied by a groom, and called at Buckingham Palace, where he entered his name in her Majesty's visiting book. Proceeding up Constitution Hill, the right honourable baronet had arrived nearly opposite the wicket-gate leading into the Green Park, when he met Miss Ellis, one of Lady Dover's daughters, on horseback, attended by a groom. Sir Robert had scarcely exchanged salutes with the young lady, when his horse became slightly restive. He was observed for a moment to sit very unsteadily, and the next instant the horse turned sharply round, and threw Sir Robert over its head upon his face. Two gentlemen, who were close to the spot, ran forward, and raised the right honourable baronet, holding him in a sitting posture. Dr. Foucart, a medical gentleman from Glasgow, who was accidentally passing, was the third to render assistance. He saw the occurrence from a distance of about a hundred and fifty yards, and, hastening forward, reached the spot as Sir Robert Peel had been raised by the other two gentlemen.







*B. L. Brodie*

Sir Robert groaned heavily ; and in reply to Dr. Foucart's question as to whether he was much hurt, he replied, "Yes—very much." During the few moments which elapsed before a carriage could be procured, Sir Robert became unconscious. In this state he remained until after he had been assisted into the carriage of a lady, Mrs. Lucas, which was passing at the time. He then slightly recovered, and again, in reply to Dr. Foucart, said, "I feel better." The carriage was then ordered to drive slowly through the park to Whitehall Gardens, Sir Robert being supported by Dr. Foucart and the two gentlemen who had first raised him from the ground. They had not proceeded more than thirty yards when Sir James Clark, her Majesty's physician, met the carriage, and having heard of the accident, he came up to see if he could render any assistance. Dr. Foucart requested Sir James to accompany him to Whitehall. In a few minutes after he entered the carriage Sir Robert became much excited, and endeavoured to raise himself up, which it was thought necessary to prevent. The right honourable baronet then again sank into a state of half-unconsciousness, in which he remained until his arrival in Whitehall Gardens. On being lifted out of the carriage he revived, and walked, with assistance, into the house. On entering the mansion, Sir Robert was met by Lady Peel and the members of his family, who had been awaiting his arrival in painful anxiety, after having received intelligence of the accident. The effect of the meeting upon Sir Robert was extremely painful. He swooned in the arms of Dr. Foucart, and was placed upon a sofa in the nearest apartment, (the dining-room). From this apartment Sir Robert was never removed, and so extremely sensitive to pain did he speedily become, that it was only after very considerable difficulty that he could be removed from the sofa to a patent hydraulic bed which had been procured for his use.

Sir James Clark having consulted with Lady Peel, it was arranged to send for Sir Benjamin Brodie, Mr. Cæsar

Hawkins, and other medical attendance. A formidable difficulty presented itself at the outset, from the fact, that Sir Robert's sufferings were so acute, that he would not permit any minute examination of his injuries to be made by the medical men. The slightest touch in the vicinity of the injured parts gave him intense agony, and the only manner in which he could be treated under the circumstances, was to assume that the comminuted fracture of the clavicle—which was evident to the eye on the right honourable baronet's being undressed—was the only broken bone, and that the ribs were uninjured. After the consultation, it was determined to reduce this fracture; but, owing to the extreme sensibility of the patient, the operation was not completely performed, and, at the expiration of a few hours, the sufferer entreated that he might be released from the bandages, and they were accordingly taken off.

During Saturday evening Sir Robert was permitted to see Lady Peel and the members of his family; but afterwards it was thought advisable to exclude all persons from the apartment, in order to lessen the probability of subjecting the patient to any degree of excitement. Sir Robert passed a restless night on Saturday, his extreme sensibility to touch increasing hourly, and his symptoms altogether becoming very alarming. On Sunday evening the patient's pulse having increased from between 80 and 90, at which it had ranged after the accident, to upwards of 100, it was deemed necessary to take some blood, with a view of reducing inflammation. Twenty leeches were accordingly applied to the left shoulder, and a large quantity of blood was obtained. There was no positive improvement in the condition of the patient from this operation, and he continued in a very precarious state throughout the whole of Sunday and Monday. On Monday night the alarming symptoms were greatly increased. About seven o'clock Sir Robert became delirious, and attempted to raise himself up in his bed. In this state

he continued during the greater part of the night, but at intervals he became so much exhausted, that his medical attendants were of opinion that he could not survive through the night. In the paroxysms of his sufferings his thoughts were with his oldest and dearest friends, and the names of Hardinge and Graham were frequently upon his lips. At four o'clock on Tuesday morning Sir Robert fell into a sound sleep, in which he continued until eight o'clock. On awaking, his mind was quite composed, and his medical attendants considered him to be much refreshed. There was still, however, much cause for anxiety. From the period of the accident up to this time (nearly seventy hours) Sir Robert had taken no other sustenance than a glass of champagne and the yolk of one egg beaten up, which he was induced with some difficulty to swallow. Medicine had been administered as a matter of course, but throughout the same lengthened period the system had remained perfectly inactive. The pulse had greatly increased on Tuesday, marking from 112 to 118, and becoming very weak; at noon on Tuesday, Sir Robert expressed himself to be a little easier. This relief was of short duration. At two o'clock more dangerous symptoms presented themselves. Sir Robert began to breathe stertorously, and ceased to answer any questions addressed to him. Sir Benjamin Brodie was again sent for, and on his arrival agreed with the other medical gentlemen, that the case assumed a most dangerous aspect. The pulse had become very weak, and marked 118. From two o'clock to six o'clock the pulse increased to 130, and became gradually weaker. Stimulants were administered, but had no apparent effect, and the stertorous breathing became more and more painful. The relatives were now informed that all the relief which medical science could afford was exhausted, and that no hope whatever existed of being able to prolong Sir Robert's life for twenty-



four hours. The Bishop of Gibraltar, (the Rev. Dr. Tomlinson,) a very old friend, was now sent for, to administer the last offices of the Church. On the arrival of the right reverend prelate, it was intimated to Lady Peel and the members of the family, that they might now, without risk of increasing the dangerous condition of the patient, be admitted to the apartment in which he lay. In a few moments the whole of the family were assembled in the presence of their beloved relative, whose exhausted condition at this time scarcely enabled him to recognize their identity.

The lamented sufferer's energies were sufficiently revived during one period of the interview to enable him to identify the features of those who surrounded his couch—towards whom he at length extended his faltering hand, and in an attitude bespeaking the intensity of his feelings, whispered in a scarcely audible voice—"God bless you!"

At the termination of this distressing scene, Viscount Hardinge, who had arrived at the mansion some time previously, and Sir James Graham, who had been informed of the fatal result anticipated, and had come down to Whitehall-gardens, were admitted to the presence of the patient, then rapidly sinking.

At nine o'clock Sir Robert had become so exhausted, as to be insensible to all external impressions. The members of his family still remained near him, with the exception of Lady Peel, whose painfully excited feelings rendered it absolutely necessary to remove her from the apartment. The sufferer's strength was so far exhausted, that although he gave occasional indications of being sensible of their presence, the power of utterance had altogether ceased, and it soon became evident that his end was rapidly approaching.

Sir Robert expired at nine minutes after eleven o'clock, on Tuesday evening, the 2nd of July. There were present at his decease his three brothers—the Dean of Worcester





1844

*The Hon. Genl. Sir John Murray*

Colonel Peel, Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence Peel ; three of his sons—Mr. F. Peel, M. P., Captain W. Peel, R. N., and Mr. Arthur Peel ; his son-in-law, Lord Villiers ; Lord Hardinge, Sir James Graham, and the medical gentlemen in attendance. Sensibility to pain had ceased some time before death, and the last moments of the right honourable baronet were not disturbed by any physical suffering.

After death an examination of the body was made, when a most important fact was for the first time discovered—viz., that the fifth rib on the left side was fractured. This was the region where Sir Robert complained of suffering the greatest pain. It was the seat of mortal injury. The broken rib pressed on the lung, and produced what is technically known as effusion and pulmonary engorgement.

As soon as the accident was made known, through the ordinary medium of the newspapers, an intense feeling of sympathy and respect was manifested through all classes of society. His royal highness Prince Albert, accompanied by the Prince of Prussia, called at Sir Robert Peel's residence within half an hour after the accident, to make inquiries after his safety. His royal highness Prince George of Cambridge, and the Duke of Wellington, hastened to Whitehall for the same purpose. Throughout the whole of Sunday, when no fatal result was anticipated, vast numbers of the carriages of the nobility and gentry drove up, to make inquiries, and the street continued crowded until a late hour of the evening. Among the anxious groups that assembled on the occasion, might be noticed many of the working classes, with marks of the deepest concern upon their faces, and many women of the humbler ranks, who, in that period of his suffering and calamity, remembered that he was the friend of the poor, and the man who had untaxed the bread of the people. In consequence of the rattle of the crowd of carriages on Sunday, which it was feared might



disturb the patient, the medical gentlemen gave instructions at an early hour on Monday morning, that no vehicles should be allowed to enter the court-yard. The gates were accordingly closed, and as parties arrived they were referred to the bulletin, copies of which were exhibited on the gates. The number of visitors considerably exceeded those upon the former day; and the anxiety exhibited to learn the contents of the bulletin was so great, that when the servant was seen leaving the mansion with it, a rush of the crowd to the gates took place, and the policeman in attendance was compelled to read it aloud for the information of the people.

During the afternoon, the crowd increased so much, that additional officers were sent to preserve order, and a copy of the bulletin was furnished to a constable stationed at the entrance to Whitehall Gardens, in order to enable him to answer inquiries in Whitehall, and thus lessen the pressure of the crowd near the mansion.

On the Wednesday morning, when the melancholy intelligence of his death was made known, many of the principal mercantile establishments in the City, and at the West End, manifested their high respect for the lamented deceased, and their deep regret at his premature demise, by closing their windows—a proceeding almost universally adopted in the neighbourhood of Whitehall. The flags of many vessels on the river, and also on many public buildings, were hoisted half-mast high.

In every part of the country, the same feelings of deep respect and sorrow were manifested. The common expression of the people was, that they felt “as if they had lost a private and personal friend or relative;” and the humblest members of the community shared, to the fullest extent, the general sympathy. On the arrival of the sad intelligence in Liverpool, flags were hoisted half-mast high,—in the Town-

Hall, the Custom House, St. George's Hall, the Collegiate Institution, the Bluecoat Hospital, and other public charities, as well as the different churches and chapels, and also in the main streets, on the roofs of several private houses. Along the line of docks the forest of shipping presented the same mournful appearance, and in every direction might be seen indications of the public sorrow for the loss which the country had sustained in the untimely removal of its greatest legislator.

At the meeting of the House of Commons at the ordinary hour on Wednesday, none of the members of the government being present, Mr. Hume rose amid the most profound silence, and with evident emotion said: "Mr. Speaker—I hope, sir, that in addressing the House, I may be excused for expressing the deep regret which I feel, and which I am sure every member of this House must feel, at the loss which we have so lately sustained by the death of Sir Robert Peel. I cannot, sir, allude to the conduct, or the career, of that right honourable gentleman, more particularly of the latter years of his life, during which events of immense importance have taken place, mainly owing to the part which he took in this House, without forming the highest opinion of the man who could sacrifice power, and the friendship of intimate friends and acquaintances—everything—to perform those duties which he believed the imperial interests of the country demanded of him. It is, sir, needless for me to say more than to express the hope that, if the House shall concur with me in the sentiments of deep regret which I have feebly attempted to express, that they will also concur with me in doing that which is the best means by which we can, upon this occasion, show our respect for our great departed statesman and late member, by moving the adjournment of this House, and not proceeding with any of the business of the day. It is impos-

sible for me to state—[here the honourable member's voice faltered, and it was with difficulty the reporters could catch his observations]—indeed, sir, I have not the power to express my feelings; and I feel so strongly the public loss the right honourable baronet's death has caused, that I have only, sir, humbly to submit that the House should concur in a unanimous resolution of adjourning, out of respect to the memory of the right honourable baronet.”

Mr. Gladstone, who rose deeply affected, said: “As the honourable member for Montrose, from motives which I am sure all of us appreciate, has submitted this motion to the House, and as I see no other person present who has ever been connected by office with the lamented statesman, of whose loss it is intended to mark our deep sense by an adjournment, I beg leave to second the motion which has been made by the honourable member. I am perfectly sure, that it will be a matter of deep regret to the noble lord at the head of the government, who, in consequence probably of the introduction of this subject a few moments earlier than might have been expected, has been deprived of the satisfaction which I am sure he would have felt in bearing a part on this melancholy occasion. He will regret, I am certain, that he was deprived of bearing his part in this, the earliest, but not the last, high tribute of respect which will be paid to the memory of one whom, sir, I am, alas, no longer forbidden to name in this place, the late Sir Robert Peel. The subject introduced by the honourable member for Montrose—he will understand me when I say it—is one which does not at this moment admit of discussion. I am quite sure, that every heart is much too full to allow us, at a period so early, to enter upon the consideration of the amount of that calamity with which the country has been visited in his, I must even now say, premature death; for though he has died full of years,

and full of honours, yet it is a death which our human eyes will regard as premature ; because we had fondly hoped, that in whatever position he was placed, by the weight of his character, by the splendour of his talents, by the purity of his virtues, he would still have been spared to render to his country the most essential services. I will only, sir, quote those most touching and feeling lines which were applied by one of the greatest poets of this country to the memory of a man great indeed, but yet not greater than Sir Robert Peel :—

‘ Now is the stately column broke,  
The beacon light is quench’d in smoke ;  
The trumpet’s silver voice is still ;  
The warder silent on the hill.’

Sir, I will add no more—in saying this I have, perhaps, said too much. It might have been better had I simply confined myself to seconding the motion. I was, however, in hopes that, by my protracting these observations for a few seconds, there might, perhaps, have entered the House some persons who would have been more worthy than I to bear some part in this melancholy duty. It is not so ; and I am sure, the tribute of respect which we now offer, will be all the more valuable from the silence with which the motion is received, and which I well know has not arisen from the want, but from the excess of feeling on the part of members of this House.” The right honourable gentleman resumed his seat deeply affected, and during the delivery of this short speech he was several times almost inaudible.

Similar sentiments were expressed by Mr. Napier and Sir Robert Inglis. The last-named gentleman, who was known for his hostility to the policy pursued by Sir Robert Peel on the two great occasions of his life—the emancipation of the Roman Catholics, and the repeal of the Corn-laws—stated that it was “ with the most cordial feeling and cordial respect



that he rose—not that he was in any sense entitled to bear his testimony to the character of that great man, but as one who had had a seat for some time in the House—to state, that he believed there never was a man who made greater sacrifices for the public good. Power he sacrificed willingly: and he would have sacrificed everything, except that which he considered paramount to everything—the good of his country. Those who most differed from the right honourable baronet in their views upon those subjects referred to by the honourable member for Montrose, would, he was sure, unite in one cordial feeling of grateful respect for the memory of a man who did more to distinguish that House among the deliberative bodies of the world, than any man who ever sat within its walls.”

Sir William Somerville, in expressing the same respect and sympathy, explained, on the part of the government, that the absence of Lord John Russell was caused by his non-arrival from the country, whither he had proceeded on the previous night. The motion for the adjournment of the House was then agreed to; the whole of the proceedings having occupied less than a quarter of an hour. On the following day, when the House met at twelve o'clock, Sir George Grey, Secretary of State for the Home Department, rose with deep emotion, and said: “I rise, sir, to ask the House to agree to the postponement of the whole of the public business which stands upon the paper for twelve o'clock this day, until after the other orders of the day shall have been disposed of in the course of the evening sitting. I regret that the House has been put to the inconvenience of meeting thus early to-day, but as the orders which now stand for twelve o'clock were fixed several days since for consideration upon the morning sitting of to-day, it was unavoidable that the House should meet upon the present occasion. But, as my noble friend at the head of the govern

ment is anxious to take the first opportunity of the meeting of the House, and before entering upon the discussion of public business."

At this portion of his address, the right honourable baronet sobbed audibly, his face was suffused with tears, and, after a pause of some duration, in which every member present appeared to participate in his emotion, proceeded with a faltering voice, so choked with grief as to be scarcely audible—"My noble friend was anxious, before the discussion of any other public matter, to express the feeling—the deep feeling—which he, in common with every member of her Majesty's government, and every member of the House, must entertain with respect to the melancholy occurrence which has so recently taken place, and he considered it better that that expression of feeling should take place at the ordinary hour of meeting, and when the House would be full. I would therefore ask the House, having now been constituted, to allow you, sir, to take the chair again at half-past four this evening, when my noble friend will be in his place. I hope the House will consent to this course, and that no discussion will take place upon this occasion. I wish, however, to add one word, in order to express my deep regret, and to apologize to the House, personally, and on my own account, for being unavoidably absent yesterday, my noble friend not having been present. It is, sir, a matter of the deepest regret to me; had I been present, I should certainly have joined most cordially in that appropriate mark of respect which the House, upon its first meeting after the melancholy event took place, paid to the memory of that great man who has been thus suddenly removed from us by the dispensation of Providence."

No other member having risen to address the House, the motion was unanimously agreed to, and the House adjourned.

On resuming at half-past four in the afternoon, Lord John

Russell paid the expected tribute to the memory of his great and deeply-lamented rival. Having brought up the Report of the Commissioners of the Great Exhibition, on the subject of the proposed site in Hyde Park, the noble lord said :—

“ Mr. Speaker—In moving that these papers lie upon the table, I will ask the House to allow me to take this opportunity of mingling my voice of sorrow with that of the House in general, at the great loss which this House and the country have sustained. Sir, at the first contemplation of that misfortune, it is impossible not to be overcome with a feeling of awe—that one, who so late as Friday night last, informed the House by his judgment, and took a part which became him in one of the most important discussions of the year, should already be mingled with the dead, and that, sir, not by an attack of disease gradually overcoming nature by the exertion of its power, but by one of those common accidents by which we are apt to think, that a life so gifted could hardly be taken from us. Sir, in speaking of that great man, it is impossible not to reflect that hereafter, this House will no longer be guided by that long and large experience of public affairs, by that profound knowledge, by that oratorical power, by that copious, yet exact memory, with which this House was wont to be enlightened, instructed, and guided. It is not for me, or for this House, to speak of the career of Sir Robert Peel—it never happened to me to be in political connection with him—but so late as that last debate to which I have alluded, I took occasion to thank him for that fair and frank support which he had given to the present government. Sir Robert Peel, in that speech which preceded the one which I addressed to the House, in speaking against the policy of the government, spoke with such temper, with such forbearance towards all those who might hold opposite opinions to his own, that it must be a satisfaction to those who remain, that his last

address in this House should have been one of such candour and of such kindness to all around him. There can, I think, be no doubt that, however history may deal with the wisdom of the career which he pursued, it will be admitted that upon two great occasions, when he held power undisturbed, and apparently with almost perfect security, and when he proposed measures to this House which shook, and afterwards subverted his power, that he did so from the motive of deep love to his country, and from that deep sense of duty which always distinguished him. Of these occasions I shall not speak; but there is one part of his career to which I would wish but briefly to refer, and of which I trust I may be allowed to speak, because I feel it due to him to pay that tribute which has not, perhaps, been hitherto paid to his merits. I allude to that period which elapsed from 1832, to 1841. After the contest which took place upon the Reform bill, it was to be dreaded that those who had opposed that bill, expecting results from it calamitous to the country, would have retired in disgust from public contests, and thereby have left a war of classes to be carried on, which would have involved permanent injury to this country. I consider Sir Robert Peel to have been the man who prevented such a contest from taking place. Although he had opposed the Reform bill, yet he addressed himself manfully to the situation in which he was placed; he addressed himself to the country on behalf of those principles of which he was the most able defender; and brought back again the various powers of the State into harmony, and showed himself not afraid of abiding by the verdict of the people, upon those measures and principles, of which he was the advocate. I consider that great service was thus rendered by him to the country upon this occasion. Without entering, however, into the merits of that distinguished man, I think that one so gifted, having the means of living apart from the



struggles, the contentions, and the labours of political life, and having likewise a love for literature, and a taste for art, which might well have enabled him to live a happy life, apart from all political contests—the example, I say, of such a man devoting himself to the labours which a parliamentary position imposed upon him, for the advantage of the people, is an example which ought not to be lost, and which I hope will not be lost on the people of this country. With respect to those questions upon which he differed from a large portion of this House, I do not wish now to enter into or discuss them; but this I must say, that my testimony will always be, that the harmony which has prevailed for the last few years, and the safety which we have enjoyed during times of trouble and contention in this country, have been mainly owing to the course which the late Sir Robert Peel thought it his duty to follow. With these feelings, I wish to say, that if it should appear to the friends of Sir Robert Peel, that it will be desirable to take that course which was taken upon the death of Mr. Pitt, I should, for my own part, though I shall not proceed to make any motion, or raise any discussion on such a subject, give my willing support to any motion that may be made for a public funeral. Or if it should be thought that the example which was adopted with respect to the funeral of Mr. Grattan should be followed, I should be ready to concur in any course of that kind. I may, perhaps, be permitted to add, that, thinking it right to obtain the sanction of the Crown before I made any such proposal, I felt assured that anything which could do honour to the memory of Sir Robert Peel, or which could add any further tribute of respect to his name, would be unhesitatingly sanctioned by the assent of her Majesty. Sir, I wish, in concluding these few words, to say, that I place myself entirely in the hands of the nearest friends of the late Sir Robert Peel. Having had no political

connection with him myself, perhaps this proposal may come more fitly from me, as not being moved by any partiality ; but I do feel that this country now, and that posterity hereafter, in reckoning the names of eminent statesmen who have adorned the annals of this country, and have contributed to their lustre, will place that of Sir Robert Peel among the foremost."

Mr. Goulburn—who was at times almost inaudible from suppressed emotion—said, as nearly as could be collected by the reporters—"Sir, I am sure the House will not consider it unnatural or unbecoming in me, if I, who have had the inestimable advantage of being connected with the late Sir Robert Peel in intimate bonds of friendship, and who have been selected by him to carry into effect his last wishes, as well as authorized by his family to express their feelings, rise to offer a few observations. I do not rise, however, with the view of adding anything—it would be impossible to do so—to the testimony which the noble lord has borne to the merits of my lamented friend ; and if I were to attempt to enlarge on those qualities which he possessed, his loss is too recent for me to accomplish the task, and the tongue would refuse to utter what the heart would prompt. I rise merely to express to the noble lord and to the House, the feelings entertained by his friends and family with respect to the proposition which the noble lord has made. I accept it on their behalf with the deepest gratitude, as a proof of the gracious disposition of the Sovereign to acknowledge the merits of a great public servant. I accept it with equal gratitude, as the highest tribute of respect which the House of Commons can pay, whatever may be the extent of the virtues or the public services of an individual, by offering him a public funeral. I speak not only in my own name, but in that of Sir Robert Peel's family, when I say that I feel deeply the honour of such

a proposition, suggested by the Crown, and responded to by the general feeling of the House. But I may be permitted to state this—that those who were unacquainted with the late Sir Robert Peel, can know but little of the simplicity of his character. If ever there was a man who was distinguished by a desire to avoid pomp and ostentation, that individual was Sir Robert Peel, and he particularly deprecated pomp and ostentation in connection with funeral ceremonies. During the earlier years of my connection with him, this feeling has been repeatedly expressed to me, and it was repeated at a later period of his political career. Perhaps some of his friends will not feel it due to their opinion of his merits to give weight to an opinion thus privately expressed; but that there was no change of opinion on his part, I have the means of satisfying the House. I will read to the House an instruction which Sir Robert Peel penned on the 8th of May, 1844, when he was in the plenitude of power, at the head of a large party in this House, and when the measures which he had recently brought into parliament had been crowned with success, even beyond his expectation. The paragraph is as follows:—‘I desire that I may be interred in the vault of the parish church of Drayton-Basset in which my father and mother were interred, and that my funeral may be without ostentation or parade of any kind.’ Nor did this sentiment undergo any alteration; for not later than six weeks ago, when an alteration was made in that church to which this memorandum referred, Sir Robert Peel pointed out to Lady Peel the very spot in the vault in which he wished and trusted that his body might be laid, without any of that parade and ostentation which he so earnestly deprecated, and the absence of which he so entirely approved of and admired at the funeral of the late Queen Dowager. Under these circumstances, therefore, I am sure that the House



will feel that I have but one duty to perform, and that the family of Sir Robert Peel have but one wish, and that is, thankfully to acknowledge the intentions of her Majesty to confer upon him the greatest honour that ever was paid to a subject by the Sovereign and the Commons' House of parliament, but at the same time respectfully but firmly to decline the proposal. I will only entreat the House to add to the mark of respect which they have already paid to the public services of my lamented friend, a further mark of respect to his simplicity of character, and to give effect to the wishes which he expressed as to the manner in which he should be laid in the grave. I feel sure that the House will comply with those wishes, because they have already recorded what their sense of his merit is by a spontaneous adjournment when his decease was made known—an honour which will ever live in the journals of this House, and which, I believe, was never before paid to a subject. I throw myself, therefore, on the indulgence of the House, and they, I am sure, will feel that it is with a sense of the deepest gratitude for the honour which has been paid to Sir Robert Peel, that I would further entreat them, while the wound is so recent, and the feeling of his loss so strong, that discussion on the subject may not proceed further."

Mr. Herries next rose, "to discharge a very painful duty, which, notwithstanding, it would be much more painful for him to leave unperformed. His reason for venturing to ask for the attention of the House for a few moments, was simply this; that it happened that he was the only person connected with the great political party which occupied so large a space in that House, who had been intimately acquainted with Sir Robert Peel. Through all the various successions of political change—from the year when he first had the honour of a seat in that house, till 1841—he had been closely connected



with him in official life, and it was one of the proudest circumstances in his life, that he had at the same time enjoyed the intimate personal friendship of Sir Robert Peel. He would add, that when, after a separation for some time, caused by his (Mr. Herries') absence from the House, he returned to that House, unfortunately in decided opposition to measures of the greatest magnitude on which that great statesman had embarked his political reputation, not the slightest disturbance took place in the personal friendship which existed between them. He would not attempt on this occasion to speak in the language of eulogium or panegyric. He rose only to add his contribution to the universal expression of admiration and regret which had arisen in all hearts on this occasion, and to express what he believed to be the feeling of those around him, that no reminiscence of diversity in political opinion would for one moment mingle with the sentiment of profound regret and sorrow at the melancholy accident which had deprived the country of its most eminent statesman, and the House of its most distinguished ornament."

In the House of Lords on the same evening, a similar scene was enacted; rendered even more impressive by the sorrow of the aged Soldier—the dearest private friend, and staunchest political ally, of the deceased.

The Marquis of Lansdowne, as the representative of the government, was the first to mention the subject. He said—"My lords, I will, with the permission of the House, for a few moments, ask your attention to a subject which I am sure is present in all your minds. I have to ask your lordships to deviate from the ordinary course of proceedings, so far as to hear me on a subject which is not before the House. My lords, it is quite true that when we look around this place, we do not feel the loss of any important person here; there is no great blank in this place; but, my lords, we are

all deeply made aware of a loss which has occurred in another assembly, with which we are connected by so many ties and relations, political and personal. Breathing as we do the same atmosphere, and daily occupied with the same objects, any occurrence deeply affecting the interests and proceedings of that assembly, cannot do otherwise than extend its influence to ours. My lords, we all must be aware that to that assembly there has befallen a great calamity in a great personal loss; and it would be extraordinary indeed if the deep voice of sorrow which has been raised there, did not find an echo within these walls. My lords, as it appears to me, it is not the time to sit in judgment upon the political conduct—upon the public actions—of any great statesman, the moment his presence is withdrawn. The conduct of every great public man, *posteritati narratus et traditus*, must abide the judgment of that posterity—the actions of one generation must submit to the judgment of another, perhaps better qualified, by being further removed from the scenes of those actions, to contemplate and survey them in all their bearings and in all their results. But, my lords, there is one tribute at least due to the past exertions and final close of that distinguished public man's life, the value of which is important in proportion as it is instantancous—that is, my lords, the expression of public sympathy unasked, unsolicited, unsought for—from all quarters and from all classes of society, attending—I wish I could add, cheering—the dying moments of such a man. Such sympathy and such feelings are unmixed with political opinions, and it is evident that your lordships are no less disposed than every other class of the community, to offer your condolence on this melancholy occasion. For myself, I can only say that it has been my fortune, from a prolonged life, to witness the commencement and development of the career of the individual whom I must now unfortunately call the late Sir Robert Peel. I have

witnessed his first exertions, and the commencement of that career which, in the ordinary course of nature and human events, I could not expect to see close. I have for more than forty years, perhaps more than most others, but certainly for a much longer time than many others, been made aware of the unremitting zeal with which the life of that eminent man has been exclusively devoted (devoted more than that of any other person) to public objects and to the service of the state, bringing to that service the greatest and most distinguished talents, equally great and equally distinguished in business and in debate. And, my lords, such having been the case, such exertions having been continued to the last, it would be impossible to witness that sudden and unexpected close to such a life so employed, without that passing expression of sympathy, sorrow, and condolence, which I believe all persons in the country, and more especially all those connected with its legislation and public proceedings, have witnessed the event that has filled their hearts with sorrow, and their minds with apprehension. My lords, I will say no more; what has been felt in the assembly of which he was a member, is felt here, and is felt throughout the country. And I persuade myself that, however feebly, I have but given vent to your lordships' feelings, as well as my own, when I have endeavoured that such a loss should not pass unnoticed in this House."

Lord Stanley next rose. "My lords," he said, "it has been my fortune at some times to have been opposed, at other times to have been the colleague of the late Sir Robert Peel. It has been with deep regret, that during the last four years of my life, I have been separated from him by a conscientious difference of opinion—I am sure on both sides—on an important matter. It is with equally deep regret I know that that difference of opinion remained to the very day of his death; but it is a satisfaction to me to feel personally, that whatever

political differences there might have been between us, there has been subsisting no personal hostility on my part, as I am confident there was none on his. I never was one of those who attributed unworthy motives to a course of conduct I deeply regret. I believe that in the step he took, Sir Robert Peel was actuated by a conscientious desire to do what he thought was for his country's good. Mistaken as I think he was in that view, I believe that on that occasion, as on all others, it was the leading principle of his life to act for what he believed to be the welfare and good of his country; and that for that object, he was prepared to make and did make every sacrifice. He made in some cases sacrifices so extensive, that I scarcely know what great and paramount object of his country's good was sufficient to excite such sacrifice on the part of any public man. But this is not the place or time to speak of differences or agreements in public affairs—a great man, a great statesman, has passed away from us by the sudden and inscrutable disposition of Providence. He has left to the other House, amongst his compeers, and to his country, a great cause for regret. They are deprived of the service of great and powerful eloquence, unflinching diligence, and unsparing application; for all his best talents, his strength, his health, and all his great powers, were devoted to the service of the state. This is the moment when all contention should cease, and when the most solemn feelings must impress themselves on your lordships' minds respecting the vanity of all human hopes. It reminds us of the instability of those things on which the destinies of nations depend; and it is not unfitting to remember, that we are in the hands of One who rules the destinies of nations by other means than we can understand. I am sure I shall be joined by your lordships—I am sure I shall be joined by the country at large—I am sure I shall be joined by universal Europe, in the expression of deep regret for the sad bereavement his



family have sustained, by the sudden loss inflicted upon his country, and by the sudden removal of one whose private life was universally believed to be irreproachable; and who, whatever may have been the difference of political views, must enjoy the praise of being an able, zealous, and conscientious servant of his country."

Lord Brougham was equally cordial in his eulogy. He said—"I hope I may be permitted, with my noble friend who last addressed you, to linger for a single moment on that melancholy event to which allusion has been made. I have for forty years had the fortune of being very generally opposed to Sir Robert Peel on most important questions, and I am willing to acknowledge cheerfully and conscientiously the splendid merits of that eminent individual. I am ready to confess, that, even on those points upon which we most widely differed, he acted from pure and conscientious motives. In the last stage of his public life, chequered as it was—I told your lordships that chequered it would be—for I knew it must be painful to an amiable, and generous, and honourable man, when he differed with those he had so long been connected with, and from pure public-spirited views adopted a course displeasing to him; in that stage of his life I also said, and I now repeat it, that he had to turn from the storm to the sunshine of an approving conscience. Differ as we may, dispute as we may—were he right or were he wrong—he pursued that course which he firmly believed the interests of his country demanded, and in pursuing which he made sacrifices, compared with which all the sacrifices I have known to be exacted by a sense of duty at the hands of public men, sink into utter insignificance."

The Duke of Wellington, who was deeply affected, said "My lords, I rise to express my satisfaction at the observations which have been made in reference to Sir Robert Peel, by those who were opposed to him all his life, as well as by

those who were only lately opposed to him. I have known him during a long period, and for a long time was connected with him in her Majesty's councils, and I have never ceased to enjoy his friendship. During the whole course of my acquaintance with him, I had a lively confidence in his truth, in his justice, and in his invariable desire to promote the public service. In the whole course of my communication with him, I had never known an instance in which he did not show the strictest preference for truth. I never had, in the whole course of my life, the slightest reason for suspecting that he stated anything that he did not firmly believe to be the fact. I could not sit down without stating what I believe, after a long acquaintance, to have been his most striking characteristic. I must also again express my satisfaction at the sentiments which have been expressed by the noble lords about me."

The Duke of Cleveland "believed he might say, that he had a longer intimacy with Sir Robert Peel, than any of their lordships. He lived on the closest terms of friendship and intimacy with him for three years, when they were both at college, and he could bear personal testimony to the diligence and assiduity with which his late distinguished friend devoted himself to his studies while at Oxford. He had a vivid recollection of the early impression made upon his mind by the youthful friendship of one who was destined to rise to so eminent a position; and he could not allow the present mournful occasion to pass without paying a last tribute of esteem and regard to one who had proved so great an ornament to his country, and whose memory would ever live in the grateful recollection of the present and of future generations."

On a subsequent occasion, His Royal Highness the Prince-Consort took the opportunity of the great banquet at York, given by the Lord Mayor of that city to the Lord Mayor of

London, to render his tribute of respect to the memory of the deceased. The banquet was given in return for the invitation of the Lord Mayor of London, to all the municipal authorities of those towns of the kingdom which had co-operated in the preparations for the Great National Exhibition of 1851; and was the first appearance in public of His Royal Highness after the melancholy bereavement which the legislature and the country had sustained. The Prince, with the good feeling and the unaffected and manly eloquence which characterized all his public displays, after some graceful allusions to the Exhibition, and a modest recital of his own share in it, said:—

“ There is but one alloy to my feelings of satisfaction and pleasure, in seeing you here assembled again; and that is, the painful remembrance that one is missing from amongst us, who felt so warm an interest in our scheme, and took so active a part in promoting its success; the last act of whose public life was attending at the royal commission; the admiration for whose talents and character, and the gratitude for whose devotion to the Queen, and private friendship towards myself, I feel a consolation in having this public opportunity to express. Only at our last meeting, we were still admiring his eloquence, and the earnestness with which he appealed to you to uphold, by your exertions and personal sacrifices, what was to him the highest object—the honour of his country; he met you the following day, together with other commissioners, to confer with you upon the details of our undertaking, and you must have been struck, as everybody has been who has had the benefit of his advice upon practical points, with the attention, care, and sagacity with which he treated the minutest details; proving that, to a great mind, nothing is little, from the knowledge that, in the moral and intellectual, as in the physical world, the smallest point is only a link in the chain, and holds its appointed place in

that great whole which is governed by the Divine wisdom. The constitution of Sir Robert Peel's mind was peculiarly that of a statesman, and of an English statesman. He was liberal from feeling, but conservative upon principle. Whilst his impulse drove him to foster progress, his sagacious mind and great experience showed him how easily the whole machinery of a state, and of society, is deranged, and how important, but how difficult, also, it is to direct its further development in accordance with its fundamental principles, like organic growth in nature. It was peculiar to him, that in great things as in small, all the difficulties and objections occurred to him first. He would anxiously consider them, pause, and warn against rash resolutions; but having convinced himself, after long and careful investigation, that a step was not only right to be taken, but of the practical mode also of safely taking it, it became to him a necessity and a duty to take it. All his caution and apparent timidity changed into courage and power of action, and, at the same time, readiness to make any personal sacrifice which its execution might demand."

Not less remarkable—and justly deserved—was the tribute of respect paid to the memory of the deceased by the legislature of the French republic. After the *procès-verbal* had been read, on Friday, July the 5th, M. Dupin, sen., the president, rose, and expressed himself as follows:—

"Gentlemen, at the moment when a neighbouring people, our ally, deplors the loss which it has just experienced, in the person of one of its statesmen most worthy of esteem, I think that it will be to confer honour on the French tribune to express our sympathetic regret on this occasion, and to manifest our high esteem for the eminent orator alluded to, who, during the whole course of his long and glorious career, has never expressed any sentiments towards France but those of kind feeling and justice, and whose lan-



guage has always been that of courtesy towards her government. If the assembly deigns to approve of my words, mention shall be made of the fact on the official minutes of our sittings."

So extraordinary an honour paid to a foreign statesman was wholly unprecedented. So far from the representatives of France stopping to inquire whether such a thing had ever been done before, they received the generous words of M. Dupin with enthusiasm, and, without a single dissentient voice, ordered them to be recorded on the minutes of the Assembly. The French newspaper-press shared the sympathy of the Assembly; and one journal truly observed, that "of all the acts of homage of which the memory of Sir Robert Peel is the object, that which the French republic has rendered to it, through the organ of her representatives is, unquestionably, the one which will the most sensibly touch the English nation." The whole of the public press, whether representing Legitimists, Orleanists, Bonapartists, or Republicans, were loud in praise of M. Dupin for having brought forward the subject, and of the Assembly for the manner in which it received it.

The sympathy of the French people did not end with this unprecedented and gratifying display of national good-will. A letter\* was received by his royal highness Prince Albert,

\* The following is a copy of the letter :—

"A SON ALTESSE ROYALE LE PRINCE ALBERT, PRESIDENT DE LA COMMISSION ROYALE BRITANNIQUE POUR L'EXPOSITION DE TOUTES LES NATIONS, LE PRESIDENT DE LA COMMISSION NATIONALE FRANÇAISE.

"Prince—Je suis chargé de transmettre à la Commission que préside Votre Altesse Royale l'expression d'un sentiment douloureux qui nous anime.

"Au premier rang parmi les membres de votre Commission, les nations étrangères, auxquelles votre exposition fait appel, étaient flattées de compter le législateur illustre qui longtemps administra son pays avec bon vouloir et justice pour les autres états.

"Nos cœurs Français sont encore émus par les dernières paroles qu'il a prononcées dans le Parlement Britannique—paroles d'estime et d'amitié pour notre patrie.

in his capacity of President of the Commission for the great Exhibition of the Industry of all Nations in 1851, from the Baron Charles Dupin, the President of the French Commission, charged by the French government to co-operate with the English Commission, in which the writer rendered an affecting and just tribute to the memory of the deceased, in language which made Englishmen proud of their country, and proud, at the same time, of the foreign nation, which, in the person of one of its most distinguished public men, could forget at such a moment all national rivalry, and express its respect for a man whose loss was one that affected not alone his own country, but the whole civilized world.

The funeral took place on the 9th of July in the church of Drayton-Basset. During the forenoon it became known at Tamworth, that a special train would arrive from London, bringing with it some of the principal political friends of the late Sir Robert, who were to be the pall-bearers. This train arrived at Tamworth about noon, and shortly thereafter its passengers were conveyed in mourning coaches-and-four, to Drayton Manor. One o'clock was the hour fixed for the starting of the sad *cortège*; but about that time the sky, which had been gradually darkening to windward, became totally overcast, and a sharp rain came down. "The morning," said an eye-witness of the scene, in a description which appeared in the *Morning Chronicle* of the following day,

"En apprenant la perte inattendue et lamentable de ce grand homme-d'état, la Commission Nationale de France a décidé, d'une voix unanime, que son Président vous exprimerait les regrets sentis et profonds qu'elle partage avec les âmes généreuses, non seulement des trois Royaumes Britanniques, mais de tous les Etats où l'on tient en estime le génie, la moderation, l'amour des arts, et le respect de la paix.

"Si quelque chose peut nous consoler c'est la pensée que l'esprit équitable et liberal de Sir Robert Peel loin d'être éteint, survit et grandit dans la Commission dont il était un si digne ornement.

"J'ai l'honneur de saluer votre Altesse Royale  
avec le plus profond respect,

"CHARLES DUPIN."

had been somewhat gloomy, with occasional glimpses of struggling sunshine; but now, just as the bell in the old church tower began to clang forth its dismal minute-peal, the beauty of the day became completely overthrown. The rain descended as in a thunder-shower, the wind blowing fiercely, and half the landscape became blurred by driving vapour. Yet it was striking to observe how great a number of the spectators within the park and around the church, stood out the pitiless pelting, rather than leave the situation of vantage ground. A few certainly sought the shelter of the trees, but the majority stood stanchly where they had placed themselves."

It had been originally intended that the tenants on horseback should muster at the entrance-gate of the manor, but this plan was altered, and they joined and headed the procession as it emerged from the park into the open highway. All the tenants had expressed the strongest wish to form part of the procession, but for reasons of convenience only fifty were selected.

About half-past one, the sombre *cortège* defiled slowly away from Drayton Manor. "The sad array of mourning-coaches, and of plumes following and preceding the hearse," says the writer already quoted, "was accompanied by silent crowds, walking, uncovered and sorrowfully, along. The stillness of the march was only broken by the noise of the wheels on the wet gravel, and the occasional sob or half-suppressed ejaculation of grief, which burst from the attendant crowd. Upon the hearse was displayed, worked upon satin, the armorial bearings of the late Sir Robert Peel, and the pall was emblazoned in like manner. Slowly and solemnly the procession wended through the park and along the quiet rural lane leading to Drayton and to Drayton Church. In reverential silence it passed through the throng clustered near the churchyard, and halted at the little

wicket leading through the graves to the house of God. At this moment another fierce burst of rain fell, but the crowd heeded it not. Uncovered, and sternly mute, they saw the purple-coloured coffin lifted from the hearse; they heard the solemn tones of the Bishop of Gibraltar reading the funeral service at the head of the procession; they saw the body of the illustrious departed borne into the church, closely followed by the profoundly affected survivors of his family. As the last members of the procession disappeared beneath the portals of the old tower, there was not a rush, but a respectful yet eager movement to gain admittance.

“Little remains to be told. The coffin was placed upon a settle beside the open vault. In faltering tones the words of the sublime service were pronounced, amid choking sobs and many tears; and at the awful consignment of dust to dust and ashes to ashes, the mortal part of the great Sir Robert Peel was lowered into the tomb.”

Scarcely had this mournful ceremony been recorded in the journals, than public meetings were convened in every part of the country, to erect monuments to the memory of the departed statesman. The metropolis set the example; and first and foremost in the cause were the working classes: who very generally responded to an appeal that “a poor man’s national monument” should be erected by a public subscription of one penny each person. Many cities and towns determined to erect monuments, amongst which were the cities of London, Westminster, Manchester, Edinburgh, and Glasgow; and the towns of Bury, (where the right honourable Baronet was born,) Birmingham, Bolton, Macclesfield, Oldham, Leeds, &c. On the 12th of July, Lord John Russell made a proposition to the House of Commons, for the erection of a monument in Westminster Abbey. His lordship upon this occasion, was as deeply affected as when he formerly addressed the House. He said—“In rising to move



that the House resolve itself into committee, to consider an address to be presented to her Majesty, praying that her Majesty will be graciously pleased to give directions that a monument be erected in the Collegiate Church of St. Peter's, Westminster, to the memory of the Right Honourable Sir Robert Peel, I do not intend to dwell on the political services, or on the public character, of the deceased statesman. I take it for granted that this House will be desirous to testify the sorrow it feels at the loss this country has sustained by the death of the right honourable baronet. I take it for granted, because on the first notification of the melancholy event, the House spontaneously agreed to adjourn for the day. I take it for granted, because the feeling of regret which prevails on this subject throughout the country has been very general, and very deeply felt and expressed; thus testifying the high estimation in which it held the services of Sir Robert Peel. I take it for granted, from the feeling which was obvious when I wished to propose that a public funeral should be ordered, for the purpose of showing the respect of this House to the memory of Sir Robert Peel, and from the fact that the observations which I then made, appeared to meet with the unanimous concurrence of this House. I may also advert to the general sympathy of respect and esteem which has been manifested at this sudden and afflicting event, not only in this country, but in foreign countries; which is a remarkable demonstration, that this calamity is considered not less a loss to other nations than to our own. I believe it is without precedent, that the National Assembly of France should agree to enter on the minutes of its proceedings, the words of its president, expressive of its respect for the character, and its sorrow for the death, of a British statesman. Such, therefore, being the circumstances known to all, patent to all, I cannot but believe that this House, the seat of his exertions, and which

has so often witnessed the exercise of the great abilities with which he was endowed, will be anxious to place on record some permanent testimonial of its respect for his worth and talents. Taking this view of the subject, it remains to be considered in which way the testimony should be made. I adverted to a public funeral on a former occasion, but I did not persist, in consequence of what fell from a right honourable gentleman, (Mr. Goulburn,) who was a near friend and coadjutor of the right honourable baronet, who informed the House that Sir Robert Peel had left express directions that his funeral should be as private as circumstances would admit. Of course I cannot think, in the present instance, of proposing such acts as were adopted by this House to testify its respect, on the death of Mr. Percival and of Mr. Canning, when this House agreed to make some provision for the families of those distinguished men, who had died in the public service. There remains only, as I conceive, the proposal of the erection of a public monument, by which we may show, or endeavour to show, our sense of the loss the country has sustained. Perhaps I may, in this place, state that her Majesty, being anxious to show the sense which the Crown entertained of the services rendered by Sir Robert Peel to the Crown, desired me to inform Lady Peel that her Majesty was anxious to bestow upon her the same rank as was bestowed on the widow of Mr. Canning. I received this day an answer to this offer on the part of the Crown, which I immediately communicated to her Majesty, in which Lady Peel says it is her own wish to bear no other name than that by which Sir Robert Peel was known. Lady Peel has also intimated that a specific direction was left for his family, by the late Sir Robert Peel, in which he desires that no one of his family would receive any title or public reward in respect of any services which he might be supposed to have rendered to the country. This was the stronger reason

why this House should desire that some other testimonial should remain, by which it might testify its feeling with respect to an event so sudden, and that a calamity so great should not be allowed to pass by without notice. I have already said, that I did not mean to enter upon any question as to the public services of Sir Robert Peel, and I will not enter at this time into the nature of the measures with which his name is associated, as the mover, or of which he was the advocate. I think it far better to refer to the example which has recently been given under the commission which was appointed by her Majesty with the view of considering how far the fine arts might be made available for the adornment of the new Houses of Parliament. The committee of this commission, formed of persons holding different political opinions, had to consider the eminent men, in commemoration of whom statues should be erected, and among others, they determined that statues of Mr. Hampden and Lord Falkland should be placed in this building. If any one was disposed to open a discussion as to the merits of those great men, not only in their parliamentary struggles in the House of Commons, but also in the contests in which they shed their blood, and died on the field of battle, no one could come to this House and say that both were deserving of the same distinction. But I imagine the gentlemen who formed this commission felt that they were both men of such splendid talents, and such manly virtues, as to adorn the age in which they lived; and however different their views, and however various their talents, they had both most at heart, the love and welfare of their country. Let us not wait for a long period to elapse before we do honour to the departed statesman. Let us do so now, not two centuries hence—as in the case of the honours to Hampden and Lord Falkland;—not even ten, twenty, or thirty years from hence, but now, when every

one agrees in the desire to do honour to the memory of Sir Robert Peel. What I propose to do is to follow, with the exception of a pension, the precedent set on the occasion of the death of the Earl of Chatham. When Lord Chatham died, Colonel Barrè proposed that a public funeral should take place to his honour; but a gentleman who was then in office in the administration to which Lord Chatham was at that time opposed, gave it as his opinion, that it would be better to have a monument to the memory of Lord Chatham. That suggestion was immediately adopted, and assented to; and Lord North, the prime minister, came down to the House before the debate closed, and gave his concurrence. It is, perhaps, rather a remarkable circumstance, as connected with that vote, that Colonel Barrè, who moved it, had himself been at one time opposed as strongly as any politician could be to the opinions of the Earl of Chatham. There is also another remarkable circumstance, which I have from a noble friend of mine, to the effect that when Colonel Barrè was introduced to Lord Chatham, and made some apology for the severity of the language which he had upon occasions applied to him, Lord Chatham replied, that he could easily forgive that, for he had himself applied most severe language in commenting upon the conduct of Sir Robert Walpole, to whom he was opposed in opinion at that time; and that he was far from resenting any freedom of language to which he might be exposed, if he thought it was sincere. I think that this anecdote, considering the character of Colonel Barrè as the former opponent of Lord Chatham, does show that on occasions of this kind we should all endeavour rather to pause for a time, and forget that natural encounter upon which the welfare and interests of the country require us at other times to enter, that we should all recollect that the time when we assemble to do honour to the man who has devoted his talents to his country, is not



the time to consider particular opinions or particular measures, but rather the time when we should endeavour to show that we concur and participate in that general feeling of sorrow and regret which is felt by the great mass of the nation." The noble lord concluded by moving that the House should resolve itself into committee to consider the resolution for an address.

The House then went into committee, when the following resolution was agreed to—"That a humble address be presented to her Majesty, praying that her Majesty will be graciously pleased to give directions that a monument be erected in the collegiate church of St. Peter's, Westminster, with an inscription expressing the public sense of so great and irreparable a loss, and to assure her Majesty that this House will make good any expenses attending the same."

On the 18th of July, six days afterwards, Lord Marcus Hill reported that he had waited upon her Majesty, and received her commands, that her Majesty would give directions in accordance with that address.

Immediately after the House of Commons had in this striking manner expressed its desire to render befitting honour to the memory of its most distinguished ornament, a meeting of the inhabitants of the city of Westminster was convened, for the purpose of adopting measures to erect another memorial, in testimony of their admiration of the eminent services of the deceased. This meeting was very numerously attended; and was rendered more than usually remarkable, by the presence of the Duke of Wellington, the Earl of Aberdeen, Viscount Hardinge, the Earl of Ripon, Lord Wharnccliffe, Lord Forester, the Earl of St. Germans, the Earl Bathurst, and other friends and colleagues of Sir Robert Peel.

On the motion of the Duke of Wellington, the Earl of

Aberdeen was requested to take the chair. His lordship said :—"Before entering upon the business of the day, I cannot but express my regret that my noble friend, the illustrious Duke at my side, is not in the position in which I am placed, and I feel that you will share this regret ; but, for reasons which he has thought sufficient, he has made the suggestion to which I unwillingly yield. It is now my duty, gentlemen, to bring before you the object for which we are assembled ; and I believe I shall best consult your wishes, as I am sure I shall my own feelings, if I do so as briefly and as simply as possible. The fatal event we deplore is still so recent—it has been attended with circumstances so overwhelming—and in truth, my own share in this national calamity is so great, that I am but ill enabled, with the requisite degree of composure and equanimity, to enter into a review of the public career of Sir Robert Peel. It is possible, too, that there may be those here present, who, although cordially concurring in the object of the meeting, may, perhaps, entertain different opinions respecting various measures of a long and active political life. I shall, therefore, not say one word, or refer to a single public act, of the late Sir Robert Peel. I will merely advert to that which will not only receive the full assent of this meeting, but which, I verily believe, would be responded to by the whole of this country, when I speak of his transcendent ability, of his untiring industry, of the patriotic motives which influenced his conduct, and of the spotless integrity and disinterestedness of his career. The Commons of England have already unanimously decreed that a monument shall be erected to his memory in that place which is the national receptacle of the great, the wise, and the good. It is for us now to raise a memorial in some public and conspicuous part of this portion of the city, which may remain an object of reverence to all future ages, and which may silently, but not ineffectively,

encourage succeeding generations to imitate his virtues, and, if possible, to rival his great exertions in the service of the public."

The Duke of Wellington, who was most warmly received, and who spoke under great emotion, said: "My lords and gentlemen; Concurring entirely in the object of this meeting, I would willingly have acquiesced in the proposition made to me to take the chair, had I not been unfortunately afflicted with an indisposition—deafness—which renders me, I am afraid, entirely unfit for such a position in a public meeting. Gentlemen, you have heard from my noble friend in the chair the object of this meeting, and he has stated to you his reasons for avoiding to draw your attention to the various political events and services in which our late friend took a part. I have already had occasion to applaud the magnanimity of those who have concurred in votes containing expressions of regret for the loss this country has sustained, in suppressing all feelings of political anxiety upon either by-gone or recent differences of opinion; and certainly, gentlemen, in that which I have to submit for your consideration, I shall consider it my duty to avoid to draw your attention, or to desire you to notice, any circumstances upon which there can be a difference of opinion. All must concur in admiration of the eminent talents, and the extraordinary industry and labour, which my late honoured friend unremittingly exerted in the service of his country, whether employed in the councils of the Crown, or only as a member of parliament. All must concur in admiration of those, his great qualities, and also in admiration of his exemplary private character in every respect; and the resolution which I shall propose to you will be confined to these particular subjects. I venture then, gentlemen, to propose to you the following resolution:—  
'That this meeting desires to express a deep sense of the

irreparable loss this country has sustained in the death of Sir Robert Peel, and to perpetuate, by some enduring memorial, the recollection of his eminent talents, his unremitting and laborious exertions in the service of his country, and his exemplary private virtues.'” This and the subsequent formal resolutions necessary to carry out the proposal, were unanimously adopted.

The following letter from Mr. Cobden, in reference to the “Poor Man’s National Monument” to the memory of the statesman who untaxed their food, was perhaps even more remarkable as a tribute to the memory of Sir Robert Peel, than any that proceeded from the noblemen and gentlemen who, during their lives, had acted in concert with, and had enjoyed the private friendship of, the great departed. It was addressed to the Secretary of a Committee formed for the purpose mentioned:—

“ 103, Westbourne Terrace, July 6th, 1850.

“ SIR,—I have received your letter, requesting me to allow my name to be used as one of the patrons of an association for raising, by penny subscriptions, ‘A Poor Man’s National Monument to the memory of the late Sir Robert Peel.’

“ It will be to me a melancholy satisfaction to be associated in so appropriate a mode of expressing the almost universal feeling of sorrow at the loss of a great public benefactor. The illustrious statesman who has been taken away from us with such awful suddenness, sacrificed every other object of ambition, to secure to the firesides and workshops of the toiling multitudes of this country the blessings of increased prosperity, health, and happiness. He knew the immediate penalty he would have to pay for the service he was rendering the nation, but he relied with prophetic faith upon the future verdict of the people. In the moment of his severest trial, when delivering the speech which closed



his official career—after speaking of the ties of party which he had severed for ever, of the political friendships he had converted into bitter enmities, of the floodgates of calumny he had let loose upon himself—after recounting mournfully, but without repining, the sacrifices he had made, he turned for sympathy and justice to the mass of the people, and closed his last speech as minister with the following words:—

“‘It may be, that I shall leave a name sometimes remembered with expressions of goodwill in the abodes of those whose lot it is to labour, and to earn their daily bread by the sweat of their brow, when they shall recruit their exhausted strength with abundant and untaxed food, the sweeter because it is no longer leavened by a sense of injustice.’

“Thus, in the work you have undertaken, you are, perhaps unconsciously, realizing the aspirations of the departed statesman. In piling up the pence of the working class into a pyramid to his memory, let me suggest that the above passage be inscribed upon its base. It will prove that he did not over-estimate the justice or gratitude of his countrymen; and it will also show to future statesmen that there is security with the people for the fame of a minister who braves the vengeance of particular interests whilst conferring benefits upon the nation.—I am, sir, your obedient servant,

“RICHARD COBDEN.”

Our task draws to a close. There remains but little to be told. While the voice of the public sorrow, largely mingled with the generous admiration even of political opponents, rang throughout the country, the executors of Sir Robert Peel contributed towards making known some facts of high interest, in reference to his personal history, and character. Probate of the Will and three Codicils was granted to Colonel J. Peel, his brother; the Right Honourable Henry Goulburn,

and to the Right Honourable Henry Hobhouse. To the last two gentlemen Sir Robert Peel bequeathed £1,000 each ; to Lady Peel £3,000, with £100,000 under the deed of settlement ; his eldest daughter, Viscountess Villiers, received a provision on her marriage ; he left to his daughter Eliza £25,000 ; and to his younger sons, Frederick-William, John-Floyd, and Arthur-Wellesley, the residue of his personal property. He also left legacies to all his servants, and £750 to be distributed in the winter season, among the poor of Tamworth, Drayton, and other places. The entailed estates went with the baronetcy to his eldest son and successor ; and certain freeholds at Sutton Coldfield, and Hampton-in-Arden, were devised to his second son, Frederick. The personal estate was estimated at £500,000.

But the last of Sir Robert Peel's testamentary papers was the most important to the public. In this remarkable document he gave directions respecting his unpublished letters, papers, and documents ; and made a disposition of them in the highest degree creditable to his judgment and his feeling. The Codicil was dated the 24th of March, 1849 :—

“ I, the Right Honourable Sir Robert Peel, Baronet, declare this testamentary disposition to be a Codicil to my last Will and testament ; and I desire that it shall remain in full force as a Codicil or as a testamentary paper, notwithstanding the revocation of my existing or any future Will, except only in the case and to the extent that I shall specifically revoke or vary this disposition. I give and bequeath to the Honourable Philip Henry Stanhope, commonly called Lord Viscount Mahon, and Edward Cardwell, of Whitehall, Esq., M. P., their executors, administrators, and assigns, all the unpublished letters, papers, and documents of a private or of a public nature, whether in print or in manuscript, of which I shall at the time of my decease be possessed, upon the trusts hereinafter declared of and concerning the same.

Considering that the collection of letters and papers referred to in this Codicil includes the whole of my confidential correspondence for a period extending from the year 1812 to the time of my decease, that during a considerable portion of that period I was employed in the service of the Crown, and that when not so employed I took an active part in parliamentary business, it is highly probable that much of that correspondence will be interesting, and calculated to throw light upon the conduct and character of public men, and upon the political events of the time. I give to my trustees full discretion with respect to the selection for publication of any portion of that correspondence; I leave it to them to decide on the period and on the mode of publication, in the full assurance that they will so exercise the discretion given to them, that no honourable confidence shall be betrayed, no private feelings be unnecessarily wounded, and no public interest injuriously affected, in consequence of premature or indiscreet publication. I am especially anxious that no portion of my correspondence with her Majesty Queen Victoria, or with his royal highness Prince Albert, should be made public use of during the life of either, without previous communication with parties who may be enabled to ascertain that there is no objection whatever on the part of either, to the use proposed to be made of such correspondence. I authorize my trustees to sell or dispose of the copyright of any of the said documents, if the case in which publication should be determined on by the trustees should be one in which pecuniary compensation for such copyright could be fairly and equitably made, not meaning, however, in any way to fetter their discretion in respect of the giving of gratuitous access to the documents whenever they think such access advisable. In the case that any moneys should arise from the publication of any of the said letters, papers, and documents, I authorize the said

trustees to apply the said moneys in paying the costs and charges of such publication, as far as the trustees may be justly liable for such costs and charges, or other the expenses attending the execution of the trusts hereby reposed in them, and to apply the residue to the assistance or relief, of deserving persons being in need of such assistance or relief, engaged or who have been engaged in pursuits of art, literature, or science, or to apply such residue, or any part of it, in aid of institutions established for the relief or benefit of artists or literary and scientific persons; and my said trustees shall not be accountable to any persons whomsoever, for the application of any such moneys. With these views it is my desire that the trustees shall, with all convenient speed after my decease, collect together all the said letters, papers, and documents, and subject the same to such examination as they in their uncontrolled discretion shall think fit. I give them the fullest power to destroy such parts thereof as they shall think proper, and to provide for the immediate care and custody, and ultimate disposition, of all or any part of the said letters, papers, and documents. My trustees will probably find it convenient to cause the said letters, papers, and documents, to be brought in the first instance to London; and I authorize them to select, and to rent, or otherwise procure, a convenient place for the deposit of the said letters, papers, and documents, during such period as they shall think fit, and to cause proper catalogues to be prepared of the same, and to employ such persons as they shall think fit under their direction, for the purposes aforesaid, and for transcribing or editing the same, or otherwise in relation thereto. I authorize the trustees to give all or any of the said letters, papers, and documents, to the State-paper office, the trustees of the British Museum, or any other institution of the like nature, upon such arrangements, as to the permanent preservation thereof, as



shall be satisfactory to such trustee or trustees. And with regard to the more permanent disposal of such of the said letters, papers, and documents, as shall not have been otherwise dealt with, I reecomnd the trustees, as far as shall be consistent with the due execution of the trusts hereby declared, to deposit the same at my mansion-house of Drayton Manor; and I request that the member of my family for the time being entitled to the occupation thereof will afford suitable rooms for the deposit and eustody of the said letters, papers, and documents, and will concur with my trustees in such arrangements as the latter shall think necessary for ensuring the safety of the same, and for preserving to the said trustees free access thereto, with full power for the said trustees from time to time to regulate and prescribe the circumstances under which others shall be allowed access thereto, and to remove the same wholly or partially, and from time to time, as they or he shall think fit. But I hereby expressly declare that these recommendations and requests shall not in any way be construed to create any trust in favour of any occupier of my said mansion-house, or to give any such occupier, or any member of my family, any estate or interest in the said letters, papers, and documents, or any of them, or in any way to abridge or restrict the discretion of the trustees as to the custody or place of deposit of the said letters, papers, and documents, or otherwise in or as to the execution of the trusts hereby declared. And I give to the said Viscount Mahon and Edward Cardwell, or the trustees or trustee for the time being acting in the execution of this Codicil, the sum of £1,000, upon trust, to invest the same in their or his names or name, in the public funds, or at interest on Government or real securities. And from time to time, when and as they or he shall think fit, to alter, vary, and transfer the securities in or upon which the same shall be invested, into

or for other securities of the same or a like nature, and to apply the dividends, interest, and annual produce of the said sum, or of the securities on which the same shall, for the time being, be invested, or, if necessary, the said principal sum, or any part thereof, in providing for the costs, charges, and expenses to be incurred in the execution of the trusts hereby declared; and I direct that the surplus of the interest, dividends, and annual proceeds of the said fund not required for the purposes of the said trust which shall arise from time to time during the period of twenty-one years next after my decease, shall be accumulated by such trustees, and held by them upon the trusts hereby declared of the said principal sum of £1,000; and that any such surplus which may arise from time to time after the expiration of that period, shall be paid from time to time to the executors of my Will, as part of my residuary estate. And that immediately on the expiration of the period hereinafter limited for the continuance and duration of the trusts hereinbefore declared, of and concerning the said letters, papers, and documents, the residue, if any, of the said principal sum of £1,000, and the accumulations thereof, and the securities on which the same shall be invested, and the dividends, interest, and annual produce thereof shall be held and go, and be disposed of, upon, and for, and subject, and according to, the trusts, powers, and provisos in and by my last Will declared and contained of and concerning my residuary personal estate; and I declare that a certificate or certificates under the hands or hand of the trustees, setting forth the sum or sums for the time being, payable to my executors on account of the surplus income of the said fund, or setting forth the balance for the time being remaining of the said sum of £1,000, or of the interest, dividends, and annual produce thereof, or stating that there is no balance thereof, shall be final and conclusive

to all intents and purposes; and that no person, entitled to any share or interest in my estate, shall be entitled to call for any other account of the expenditure of the said trustees, or to call in question any such certificate. And I hereby direct and declare that, immediately on the expiration of the period of twenty-one years next after the time of the decease of the last survivor of my children, grandchildren, or more remote issue, who shall be living at the time of my decease, or in case there shall not be any of my children, grandchildren, or more remote issue living at the time of my decease, then, immediately on the expiration of the period of twenty-one years next after the time of my decease, all and singular the trusts hereinbefore declared of and concerning the said letters, papers, and documents, shall absolutely cease and determine; and the trustees shall thereupon forthwith deliver up to or hold in trust for the persons or person who shall then be my heir-at-law, all and singular the said letters, papers, and documents, or such and so many of them as shall not have been theretofore burnt, destroyed, given away, or otherwise disposed of by the trustees. And I hereby declare and direct that the receipt and receipts in writing of the trustees, for any sum or sums of money payable or to become payable to them or him under or by virtue of this Codicil, or in the execution of the trust hereof, shall be a good and effectual discharge, and good and effectual discharges, for the money therein respectively acknowledged to be received, and shall to all intents and purposes, discharge the person or persons taking such receipt or receipts, his, her, or their heirs, executors, or administrators, from seeing to the application or being accountable for the misapplication, or non-application of the same, or any part thereof; provided always, and I declare that the expression trustees herein contained shall apply to the trustees or trustee for the time being acting in the execution of this Codicil, whether

under the above appointment, or any appointment made in pursuance of the provisions for that purpose herein contained; and I hereby direct and declare that it shall be lawful for the trustees or trustee of this Codicil for the time being, or for the surviving or continuing trustee, or for the executors or administrators of the last surviving or continuing trustee for the time being, as the case may be, at any time or times hereafter, and from time to time, to appoint any other person or persons to be a trustee or trustees of this my Codicil, either in addition to and in conjunction with the existing trustees, or in the stead of any trustee or trustees who shall die or be absent from this kingdom for more than twelve months at one time, or shall desire to be discharged, or refuse, decline, or become incapable to act in the trusts aforesaid. And that upon every such appointment, the premises for the time being, subject to the trusts of this Codicil, shall by delivery and by all other necessary assurances, if any, be assigned and transferred in such manner, and so that the same may become vested in the persons who after such appointments respectively will constitute the trustees of this Codicil; and every such new trustee, and any and every new trustee who may at any time be appointed by any order or decree of the High Court of Chancery, shall, either before or after the said trust premises shall have become vested in him or them, have the same powers as if he or they had been originally named a trustee or trustees in this Codicil; provided also, and I hereby further declare that the trustees shall not be answerable the one for the other of them, and by no means for involuntary losses, nor for any loss or damage occasioned by fire, or by or through the negligence or inattention of any person or persons who may be appointed by any such trustees under the powers and authorities hereinbefore contained, to have the care and custody of the



said letters, papers, and documents, or to aid in the examination, transcription, cataloguing, or publication thereof, or by or through any act which may be done or committed, or neglected, or omitted to be done, by any such person or persons, nor for any loss or damage which may happen in the execution of the aforesaid trusts or in relation thereto, except the same shall happen by or through their or his own wilful default. And also that it shall be lawful for the said trustees to reimburse themselves or himself out of any moneys which may come to their or his hands by virtue of the trusts aforesaid, or to require from the executors of my said Will, or other the person or persons for the time being having the administration thereof, payment of all costs, charges, and expenses which may be incurred in or about the execution of the trusts hereby created and declared, or any of them, or in any wise in relation thereto, I give to each of them, the said Viscount Mahon and Edward Cardwell, the sum of £500 for his own use and benefit. In witness whereof I, the said Sir Robert Peel, have, to this Codicil to my last Will and testament, set my hand, the 24th day of March, in the year of our Lord 1849. ROBERT PEEL."

We have now brought the record of the useful and brilliant Life, and melancholy Death, of SIR ROBERT PEEL, to its close. It is too soon to attempt to render full justice to his character. In reproducing his speeches, and narrating his acts in the last few years of his life, we have played the part of the annalist, rather than of the historian; yet in summing up the impression he left upon the mind and the history of his country, in recording the estimate which was formed of him while he stood, but a few weeks before his death, apparently on the calm hill-top of his life, and during the period which has elapsed since by an ignoble casualty he was suddenly snatched away; his contemporaries need not fear that posterity will find their judgment of him to be

greatly in error. Notwithstanding all the animosities which some of his greatest measures excited—animosities which had by no means subsided when he died—his contemporaries were not blind to the eminent virtues of his character, to the greatness and purity of his aims, and to the immense influence of his opinions and acts upon the future destinies of Great Britain. Even those who raised the loudest outcry against him for abandoning his party on more than one occasion, admitted, when his ear was altogether deaf to popular censure and to popular applause, his personal integrity, and the greatness of the sacrifice which he made from a sense of imperative duty. Before he was conveyed to the simple burial-place of his family, enmity towards him was extinct in every breast, and a halo of affectionate interest, which might not otherwise have surrounded his name, gathered upon it as soon as people heard of his untimely death. All bitter feelings against the individual were allayed; for no man could look down upon such a grave “without a compunctious throb” that he should ever have imputed unworthy motives to one so disinterested, so sagacious, and so unfortunate, as he who slept beneath it. His loss was regarded by millions as a national, and by many thousands as a private and personal, calamity. It administered a shock to the feelings of all classes of the people, which did not speedily subside, and read the world a deeply-impressive lesson on the instability of human power and greatness, and on the transitory nature of all the blessings which men most enthusiastically prize, and for which they most ardently struggle.

It was the peculiar misfortune of this great statesman when considered simply as an individual, but perhaps it was an advantage for his country when he is considered in his public capacity, that he began life under the auspices of a party, with which his heart and his intellect had less

sympathy the older and more experienced he became. The bulk of the members of that aristocratic party, submitting, perhaps unwillingly, to the leadership of a man of plebeian extraction, and not possessing either his intellect or his conscientiousness, or, as individuals, the responsibility which attached to him, could not change opinions at his command, or on his example; and the cry of treason which they raised was rendered more virulent by allusions to his birth. Even in the very height of his power and fame, there were not wanting men who submitted to his leadership in despite of themselves;—who sneered at, while they followed him—affected to patronize him, at the very time that their position and fate were in his hands, and who could no more have stirred in politics without him, than a ship could have directed its own course. But in every change of opinion, it was not the violent plucking out of the fruit of his mind, and the arbitrary substitution of an alien produce, of which he could be accused. It was the natural ripening of the seeds of a slow but steady conviction; and those who complained of, and were deceived by it, had themselves to blame for their want of penetration in not foreseeing the inevitable result. In his famous speech on the passing of the Catholic Emancipation act—a measure in which his convictions, as regards the mere theory, do not appear to have been so matured as on the great question of the commercial intercourse of nations, he explained himself in a manner, which, if it did not conciliate the prejudiced of his own party, was not his excuse, but his glory, in the estimation of the practical men of his age and country.—“I have,” said he, “for years attempted to maintain the exclusion of Roman Catholics from parliament and the high offices of the state. I do not think it was unnatural or an unreasonable struggle. I resign it in consequence of the conviction that it can no longer be advantageously maintained, from believing that there are

not adequate materials or sufficient instruments for its effectual and permanent continuance. I yield, therefore, to a moral necessity which I cannot control, being unwilling to push resistance to a point which might endanger the establishments that I wish to defend."

On the question of the repeal of the Corn Laws, in which he stood in a position to himself painfully similar to that which he occupied on the question of Catholic Emancipation, the part which he acted was even in a higher degree useful to his country. Though he broke up a party, he saved a nation. Though he attracted to his own defenceless head the lightnings of the bitterest political storm that ever raged in any country, he rendered those lightnings harmless against the state. He offered up his feelings, his friendships, his very heart, as a man, when he sacrificed his party ; but in knowing that he prevented a violent revolution, in which all the best interests of the country might have been wrecked, he had his reward, both as a man and a citizen.

Throughout his career, he may be said to have acted the pre-eminently useful part of a breakwater against the floods of democratic change. The men who commenced the struggle for Catholic Emancipation, and for the repeal of the Corn Laws, were men before their time ; and, had those great questions been carried without the opposition which they encountered, they might, perhaps, have been carried in vain, or carried only that a future time might see their re-enactment. His resistance ripened public opinion, and his own ; and when both had simultaneously arrived at maturity, he yielded at the very moment when to refuse would have been madness, and when to yield was to conquer. His wise resistance until the point when resistance became foolish, and his wise concession when not to have conceded would have been perilous or fatal, enabled him to do for those great causes what their professed friends could never have done without his aid. Whilst



his political opponents were too often mere men of theory, he was the man, not of theory, but of practice—a man who was sometimes upon a wrong track, but who always steadily kept marching to a right one—a man who was always pressing forward, but never too hastily—and who never once, in any change of opinion, changed without long, patient, earnest, and honest consideration.

No man knew better than Sir Robert Peel how evanescent and worthless a thing was the applause of the mob; and, at the same time, no man more ardently longed for applause than he did. Yet it must be said, that he looked far beyond the loud voices and the clapping of hands of to-day. He looked, like “mighty Verulam,”—a man whose greatness he almost equalled, and whose virtues he far excelled,—to foreign nations and to posterity, to confirm the verdict of his own time, if it should happen to be favourable; or to reverse it, if it should happen to be against him. As regards foreign nations, his wish was abundantly gratified before he died. His was the name that represented alike the common-sense, the business-tact, and the enlightened statesmanship of England. Europe rang with his fame; and nations who never heard of his rivals or his enemies, were familiar with his actions, and respected England in his person. But though he valued the approval of foreign nations—as the verdict of contemporaries who could judge coolly and impartially upon matters upon which there was too much heat among his countrymen at home to permit them to judge impartially—a fair page in the history of his country was the dearest object of his ambition; and although we, his contemporaries, living amid the suffocating dust of the yet-unended conflicts in which he was a leader, are not entitled to speak for those who shall come after us, and who shall see more clearly than we can; we do not run any great risk of committing an error when we assert, that the unborn historian, who shall





Painted by Sir Thomas Lawrence.

Engraved by J. Smith.

SIR THOMAS LAWRENCE.  
(LATE PRESIDENT OF THE ROYAL ACADEMY.)

*Thos Lawrence*

write the full and impartial history of the first half of the nineteenth century in Great Britain, will find in civil life no purer or higher reputation to identify with it, than that of Sir Robert Peel.

In person, Sir Robert Peel is reported to have been, in his youth and early manhood, exceedingly prepossessing. In his later years, he was portly, and to some extent awkward and ungainly; and it was a jest against him, in reference to his gait and appearance in after-life, originated by his old opponent, Daniel O'Connell, and which found ready and malicious currency in the clubs of London, that "Nature had made him with two left legs." When quite quiescent, and not excited by debate, his features were dull and heavy; but when his mind was wrought up by the fervour of any subject that thoroughly occupied it, they glowed with animation and expression. It was long a subject of remark and complaint, that neither sculptor nor painter, with the sole exception of Sir Thomas Lawrence, had ever succeeded in conveying a correct likeness of him. They closely imitated the features, yet failed in the resemblance. The outer form was there, but not the inner spirit; and the dull countenance, that would not lend itself to the purposes of the artist, for want of interest in the work in hand, became duller and heavier, and more inclined to an expression of languor and sleepiness, than to that of intellectual vigour, which would more truly have suited his character. Sir Thomas Lawrence, from more intimate knowledge of his subject than was enjoyed by other artists, succeeded in a portraiture—idealized, perhaps, but yet accurate and life-like—which did justice to the benignity, calmness, and intellectuality of his features. By that portrait, the only one of many that can be considered worthy of being called a likeness, the corporeal lineaments and pervading mind of Sir Robert Peel will be best known to posterity.



As an orator, Sir Robert Peel cannot be placed in the highest rank. His was not the eloquence that could arouse the passions of a multitude; or that, having aroused them like an angry sea, could say to them, "peace, be still." He could not govern an impulsive crowd, or awe an impatient senate by his winged words, or hurl the thunderbolts of oratory, like the Jupiters of the Forum or the Market Place; but what he wanted in this impetuous vigour, he supplied by his logical power, his patient research, his exhaustive argument, his disarming candour, and his thorough mastery of his subject. As an orator, he was surpassed by many of his contemporaries both in and out of parliament; but as a debater, he had no superior, and but few equals. To expound and to persuade were his favourite tasks; and when he put forth his strength in either department, it was very dense ignorance indeed, that could not, or would not, be enlightened; and very obstinate prejudice, that would not be convinced. On some rare occasions in his parliamentary life, he soared beyond the useful cleverness which was the general characteristic of his style of debate, into the higher regions of eloquence and feeling; and some passages in his celebrated oration of 1846, when he retired from office, and took a final farewell of its anxieties and responsibilities, will bear comparison with the most noted displays of British oratory.

The private and domestic virtues of this great statesman were not much known, until death removed a veil from his secret history, and men could speak out, who had hitherto remained silent for fear of flattery or misconception. His own family, and the circle of his more immediate friends, loved him with a depth of affection and respect which could only have been prompted by his virtues and kindness. He was considered a cold man; but, like many others against whom the same objection is raised, the coldness was in the

manner, and not in the matter. He was timid and shy in well-doing, and concealed his real enthusiasm of character under a thin mask, which true and intimate judges could easily draw aside, but which, to the outer and distant public, remained impenetrable.

He was a kind friend, and an unostentatious but liberal patron of merit in whatever walk of intellectual eminence it was displayed ; and, during his later years more especially, he showed an appreciation of literature, and of the claims of literary men,—who in their life and conduct respected themselves and their high calling as much as he thought they ought to be respected,—which augured favourably of his discrimination, and his power to read the signs of the times in which he lived. Even in the midst of the thickest turmoil of politics and of business, he always found time to attend to every reasonable, and indeed unreasonable, claim upon his time. He was never in a hurry ; he took everything coolly and philosophically—and neglected nothing—not even the impertinent requests of people who had no right to intrude upon his attention or his privacy. Misery never sued to him in vain ; and his generous conduct towards the painter Haydon — accidentally disclosed to the world by a short and grateful record in the diary of the unhappy man, which was made public at the coroner's inquest upon his body, and which forced a tribute of admiration wherever it was made known,—was but one instance out of many in which his secret generosity and kindly feeling were exerted towards the unfortunate. His conduct towards the poet Southey in a time of affliction, and towards many others still living, whose names may therefore not be mentioned, was of the same character, and combined generosity with delicacy.

A judicious patron of literature and the arts ; an exemplary citizen ; an elegant scholar ; a good and humane man,

unsullied in his life and morals ;—and a statesman who loved truth and his country better than the applause of men, and who, in times of difficulty and danger, strengthened the institutions and preserved the internal peace and security of his native land, when less judgment and firmness might have imperilled or lost them all ;—such, in few words, is the character of Sir Robert Peel. His fame will grow purer with the lapse of time ; and shine—where he wished it—among the brightest names of English history.

THE END.

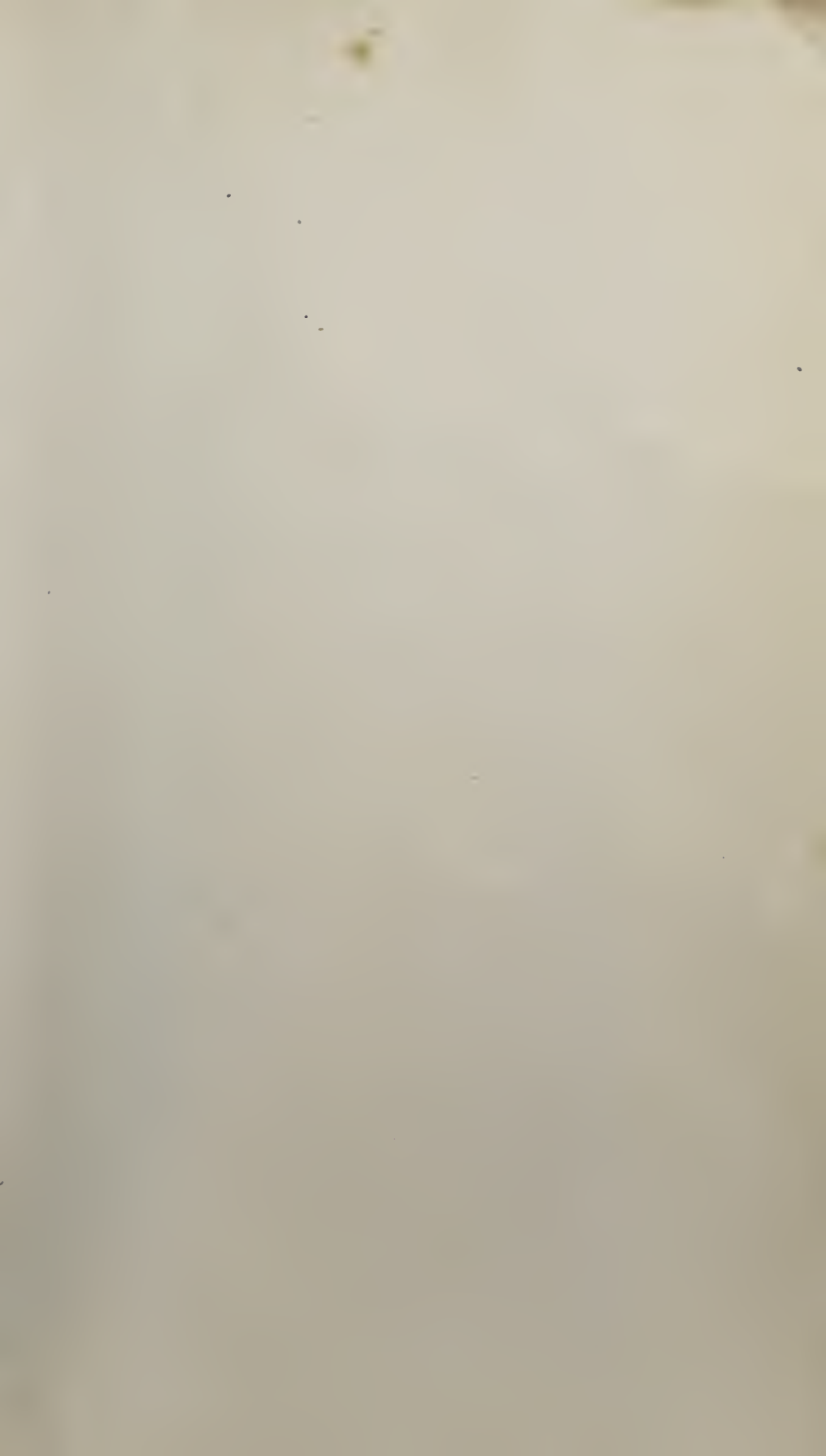














## Date Due

NOV - 7

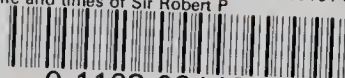
[illegible]

CAT. NO. 23 233

PRINTED IN U.S.A.

DA 536 .P3 T2 1851  
Taylor, William Cooke, 18  
Life and times of Sir Robert P

v.4  
010101 000



0 1163 0214687 7  
TRENT UNIVERSITY

DA536 .P3T2 1851 v.4

Taylor, William Cooke

Life and times of Sir Robert

Peel.

DATE

ISSUED TO

58701

